

Student Academic Representation

Annual Report
2025-2026



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Executive Summary

The Student Academic Representation scheme runs in partnership each year between Cardiff University and Cardiff Students' Union. Throughout the academic year 2025-26, student engagement improved in a range of areas. Below are some of the key highlights of the scheme in 2025-2026, based on data available throughout this report.

998 Student Academic Reps (SARs) Recruited

77% of SARs completed any form of training

525 SARs completed the end of year survey

63 Chairs and Vice Chairs attended College Forums

153 Student Staff Panel (SSP) minutes received

474 SAR rewards collected

707 Undergraduate Student Academic Reps

207 Postgraduate Taught Student Academic Reps

84 Postgraduate Research Student Academic Reps

249 Bronze certificates awarded

207 Silver certificates awarded

52 Gold certificates awarded

There are some areas of the scheme that didn't do as well, but we will continually look to improve for the future! This includes ensuring all SAR details are submitted on time and increasing the amount of SSP minutes received as well as increasing SAR engagement across the board

Introduction

The Student Academic Representation Scheme at Cardiff University, delivered in partnership between Cardiff University and Cardiff Students' Union, remains a central mechanism through which students shape their academic experience. Through elected Student Academic Representatives (SARs), students can raise feedback, influence decision making, and work collaboratively with staff to enhance learning, teaching and the wider student experience.

During the 2025-26 academic year, the academic representation system continued to play a vital role in ensuring that student voices were heard across schools, colleges and the wider University. SARs engaged with their cohorts through a range of formal and informal channels, bringing forward feedback on academic matters, student wellbeing, communication, assessment, facilities and the impact of institutional transformation. SARs worked in partnership with Students' Union staff, school staff and senior university colleagues through Student Staff Panels, College Forums and a range of other engagement opportunities.

This academic year has also taken place against a backdrop of continued institutional transformation. A key area of activity has been the Colleges, Schools and Professional Services Transformation programme. This work aims to introduce greater consistency across the University through clearer roles, responsibilities and processes, ensuring activities are undertaken in the most effective and appropriate areas of the institution. The programme seeks to reduce duplication, improve governance, clarify decision-making structures and enable a more joined-up approach to service delivery. As Cardiff University has undergone significant organisational and strategic change, the need for meaningful student engagement and effective representation has been more important than ever. SARs have played a key role in helping students understand ongoing developments, gathering concerns and experiences from their cohorts, and ensuring that student perspectives have continued to be represented throughout periods of change.

This report provides an overview of the Academic Representation Scheme during the 2025-26 academic year. It highlights Student Academic Representative engagement and achievements, examines key themes emerging from student feedback, reviews engagement from academic schools and stakeholders, and outlines priorities and opportunities for the future development of the representation system. The report demonstrates not only the continued success of the scheme, but also the impact that effective partnership working can have in creating positive change for students across Cardiff University.

Student Engagement & Activity

Over the academic year, SARs engage with many aspects of university life – both as a student and in their capacity as a representative. Through our end-of-year survey, SARs were able to tell us what they have been engaged in this year. At the end of the academic year there were 955 active SARs out of the total 998 elected. Over the year SARs can step down for various reasons be it that their course has ended or for more personal reasons. The section below focuses on how SARs have engaged with student voice activities over the year and some of the outcomes from their dedication. This report will focus on:

- Training and Support
- College Forums
- Events & Developmental Opportunities
- Impact of Academic Representation
- Rewards & Recognition

Training and Support

Following the recruitment of SARs, the Students' Union deliver a comprehensive training programme designed to prepare SARs for their role and equip them with the skills, knowledge and confidence needed to effectively represent their peers.

As in previous years, training was delivered through multiple formats to maximise accessibility and ensure SARs could engage in a way that suited their individual circumstances. SARs could attend in-person training sessions, join live digital training sessions, or complete an online training module independently.

Across the academic year, 736 training engagements were recorded, with 163 SARs attending in-person sessions, 264 engaging through digital modules and 309 attending a live online session. The continued popularity of digital and online provision demonstrates the importance of flexible training opportunities in supporting participation from students with differing timetables, placements and external commitments.

Overall, 735 of the 954 SARs completed Students' Union training, resulting in a training completion rate of 77%. This represents a small increase from 76% in the previous academic year and continues the positive trend of training engagement across the academic representation system.

Training participation remained strong across all three Colleges. The BLS and PSE Colleges both achieved training completion rates above 80%, whilst several Schools demonstrated particularly high engagement, including MUSIC (100%), EARTH (93%), MATHS (92%) and PHYSX (90%).

The training programme covered a range of topics designed to support SARs throughout their time in role, including:

- Understanding the role of a Student Academic Representative.
- Gathering and presenting student feedback.

- Student Staff Panels and wider representation structures.
- Effective communication and closing the feedback loop.
- Signposting and support.
- Engagement and development opportunities.
- Recognition and rewards.

College Forums

College Forums form part of Cardiff Students' Union's academic representation structure and provide an opportunity for SARs to raise issues beyond school level. Forums bring together SSP Chairs and Vice Chairs, Sabbatical Officers, College Deans and colleagues from professional services to discuss themes emerging across Schools and Colleges. They provide a mechanism through which feedback that cannot be resolved at school level can be escalated, whilst also creating opportunities for SARs to share best practice and learn from the experiences of their peers.

A total of 63 Chairs and Vice Chairs attended College Forums throughout the academic year, a decrease of 46 SARs from the previous academic year. Discussions covered a broad range of academic and student experience matters and provided an important mechanism for identifying issues affecting students across multiple schools and colleges.

One of the most significant themes raised throughout the year was organisational change and transformation. SARs discussed school mergers, Hyb developments and changes taking place across professional services. Whilst many students welcomed improvements to study spaces and opportunities for collaboration, concerns were also raised regarding communication, visibility of services, maintaining local support and ensuring student voice remained embedded within emerging structures. These conversations provided valuable insight into the student experience during a period of significant institutional change.

Timetabling remained one of the most consistently discussed issues across both undergraduate and postgraduate Forums. SARs raised concerns relating to timetable publication, room changes, assessment scheduling and travel between teaching locations. Alongside timetabling, significant discussion also centred on attendance monitoring, the use of artificial intelligence in assessment and teaching, access to learning resources, facilities and study spaces, and communication between students and staff.

Within the postgraduate Forums, discussion frequently focused on research culture, induction and transition into postgraduate study, PGR teaching opportunities, support for part-time and distance-learning students, access to facilities and workspace, and the impact of organisational change on postgraduate communities. SARs also highlighted the importance of creating stronger networks between postgraduate researchers and ensuring that support provision remained accessible and inclusive.

The College Forums continued to provide a valuable platform for dialogue between student representatives and the wider University community. However, attendance and engagement varied considerably across Forums and discussions often became focused on reporting updates rather than facilitating wider dialogue between Representatives. As part of the

ongoing development of the academic representation scheme, the Students' Union has reviewed the Forum structure and developed a new Student Rep Town Hall model. Further details can be found in the Looking Forward section of this report.

Events & Developmental Opportunities

Throughout the 2025-26 academic year, the Students' Union continued to offer a range of developmental opportunities designed to support SARs in building confidence, developing transferable skills and enhancing their effectiveness within the role.

A programme of Student Leader Sessions was delivered throughout the year, covering a range of topics intended to support both personal and professional development. Sessions included Managing Your Wellbeing, Meeting Skills, Democracy at Cardiff Students' Union, Interview Skills, Effective Communication and a CV Workshop. In total, 36 attendances were recorded across the programme, with the most highly attended sessions focusing on interview skills (12 attendees), meeting skills (9 attendees) and effective communication (8 attendees).

While feedback from attendees was positive, overall engagement with the programme remained lower than anticipated. Attendance patterns suggest that live developmental opportunities can be difficult for SARs to engage with alongside academic study, placements, employment and other extracurricular commitments. The variation in attendance across sessions also highlighted that SARs often require support at different points throughout the academic year, making it challenging for a single scheduled session to meet the needs of all SARs.

As a result, the Students' Union will move away from a primarily live-delivery model and instead develop a bank of pre-recorded development resources and guidance for SARs. Resources will be released at key points throughout the academic year, enabling SARs to access support when it is most relevant to their role. Topics will include gathering feedback, chairing meetings, closing the feedback loop, effective communication and personal development.

Impact of Academic Representation

Throughout the 2025-26 academic year, SARs continued to work in partnership with schools and university staff to deliver meaningful improvements to the student experience. Through SSPs, surveys, consultation activities and ongoing dialogue with staff, SARs contributed to changes affecting learning and teaching, communication, facilities and student community.

Within learning and teaching, student feedback resulted in improvements to assessment support, module information and academic provision. ENCAP implemented a more consistent Learning Central structure across modules to improve navigation and accessibility, whilst MLANG developed a whole-school dissertation workshop following student feedback. Several schools also explored or introduced reading weeks following sustained feedback from students.

SARs also influenced improvements to resources and facilities. In MUSIC, feedback raised through SSPs resulted in improvements to the MAC Suite study space, additional music stands and piano stools being purchased, and concerns regarding instrument storage and maintenance being addressed. In CARBS, student feedback contributed to the introduction of a new exam past-paper portal, more tailored field trip opportunities and additional careers and library support sessions.

Communication and engagement were other key areas of impact. MLANG students were provided with dedicated opportunities to discuss the future school merger and move into the new School structure, while MUSIC established a dedicated Student Voice channel on Learning Central to improve access to key information. ENCAP Reps helped establish new communication channels for SARs and gathered feedback on themes such as assessment feedback and the use of artificial intelligence in education.

SARs also played an important role in strengthening student communities. Across schools, Reps organised workshops, networking events, reading week activities and social opportunities, helping students connect with peers and enhance their sense of belonging. postgraduate research SARs in ENCAP also led conferences, developed networking opportunities and supported the creation of an alumni network.

These examples demonstrate the wide-ranging impact of SARs and highlight the value of partnership working between students and staff in enhancing the academic and wider student experience.

Rewards & Recognition

SARs volunteer their time and energy to represent the views and experiences of their peers across Cardiff University. Whilst the role itself offers valuable opportunities for personal and professional development, it is important that the contribution made by SARs is formally recognised and celebrated.

The Students' Union continued to operate the Rep Rewards programme throughout the 2025-26 academic year. SARs could earn points through a range of activities including attending training, participating in Student Staff Panels, engaging with development opportunities, and contributing to wider student voice activity. Both the Rep Rewards programme and certificate scheme are linked to engagement throughout the academic year, with SARs earning points through a variety of activities and opportunities.

To be eligible for Rep Rewards, SARs must complete their mandatory training, complete the End of Year Survey and achieve the required points threshold. Certificates are awarded based on the number of points achieved, with bronze, silver and gold levels recognising increasing levels of engagement.

During 2025-26, 465 SARs were eligible for Rep Rewards, demonstrating a high level of sustained engagement across the Academic Representation Scheme. 474 individual rewards were collected, representing an increase of 97 compared with the 377 rewards collected during the previous academic year. This continued growth highlights the success of the

programme in recognising and rewarding engagement throughout the year. During the academic year, a total of 508 certificates were awarded, comprising:

- 249 Bronze certificates
- 207 Silver certificates
- 52 Gold certificates

Whilst the overall number of certificates awarded was lower than in 2024-25, there was a significant increase in the number of Gold certificates awarded, rising from 32 to 52. This suggests that a greater number of SARs engaged in a wider range of activities and maintained their involvement throughout the academic year.

Overall, 53% of active SARs achieved a certificate, with several Schools demonstrating particularly strong levels of engagement, including MUSIC (89%), PHRMV (76%), and MLANG (71%)

As the academic representation system continues to evolve, recognising and rewarding the contribution of SARs remains an important part of sustaining engagement and celebrating success. The continued uptake of both the Rep Rewards and certificate schemes demonstrates the dedication of SARs across Cardiff University and the significant contribution they make in enhancing the academic and wider student experience

College	School	Trained	Attended SSP 1	Attended SSP 2	Attended SSP 3	Total Active Reps	% Trained	Chair or Vice Chair	Attended College Forum 1	Attended College Forum 2
Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences	CARBS	40	30	31	19	62	65%	8	2	1
	ENCAP	26	30	17	11	38	68%	10	4	1
	GEOPL	27	23	17	18	33	82%	2	3	2
	JOMEC	24	23	11	6	40	60%	4	0	1
	LAWPL	86	31	22	21	117	74%	12	3	2
	MLANG	43	40	35	20	52	83%	13	3	0
	MUSIC	9	8	7	7	9	100%	2	3	0
	SHARE	26	22	14	12	37	70%	10	4	1
	SOCSE	31	20	11	12	41	76%	7	1	0
	WELSH	5	7	5	5	9	56%	2	0	0
Biomedical & Life Sciences	BIOSI	40	30	23	27	46	87%	9	3	1
	DENTL	23	19	15	14	29	79%	4	2	0
	HCARE	55	54	39	32	70	79%	21	3	0
	MEDIC	14	6	2	1	18	78%	4	0	0
	OPTOM	9	7	6	4	12	75%	3	0	0
	PHRMY	24	27	22	15	29	83%	6	2	0
	PSYCH	27	11	12	9	33	82%	3	3	1
Physical Sciences & Engineering	ARCHI	33	37	15	10	38	84%	3	1	2
	CHEMY	17	16	14	10	23	74%	4	1	0
	COMSC	33	28	16	13	45	73%	5	2	3
	EARTH	39	32	26	23	42	93%	5	1	1
	ENGIN	63	62	50	39	85	74%	9	2	1
	MATHS	23	18	13	15	25	92%	2	3	1
	PHYSX	19	14	14	1	21	90%	2	1	1



College	School	Attended the Annual General Meeting	Completed the end of year survey	Received an ESLA Nomination	Achieved a Bronze certificate	Achieved a Silver certificate	Achieved a Gold certificate	Eligible for Rep Rewards	% of School achieving a certificate
Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences	CARBS	12	41	6	16	12	2	32	48%
	ENCAP	8	20	8	11	6	4	17	55%
	GEOPL	6	23	6	13	7	2	22	67%
	JOMEC	9	19	1	10	4	0	16	35%
	LAWPL	29	53	17	21	15	3	45	33%
	MLANG	10	33	8	21	11	5	30	71%
	MUSIC	1	7	4	1	5	2	7	89%
	SHARE	6	19	5	13	3	4	17	54%
	SOCSI	6	17	5	9	6	1	16	39%
	WELSH	1	3	2	0	2	1	3	33%
Biomedical & Life Sciences	BIOSI	13	33	8	11	15	5	32	67%
	DENTL	1	15	9	4	10	5	15	66%
	HCARE	11	40	9	22	18	0	35	57%
	MEDIC	0	5	0	2	1	0	5	17%
	OPTOM	4	8	2	2	6	0	8	67%
	PHRMY	6	22	6	11	10	1	20	76%
	PSYCH	3	10	4	5	3	5	10	39%
Physical Sciences & Engineering	ARCHI	6	25	2	12	6	2	23	53%
	CHEMY	3	16	3	3	10	1	15	61%
	COMSC	10	20	8	11	8	0	14	42%
	EARTH	8	28	2	6	15	2	25	55%
	ENGIN	12	44	32	29	24	3	36	66%
	MATHS	6	14	7	3	9	4	14	64%
	PHYSX	1	9	1	13	1	0	8	67%



School Engagement

The School Compliance Tracker continued to be used throughout the 2025-26 academic year to monitor engagement with the academic representation system. The tracker measures several key indicators including the submission of SARs information prior to the week 4 deadline, SAR training participation, and the submission of SSP minutes through the Student Voice and Experience Network (SVEN).

This year's compliance tracker can be seen below in table 2. There have been some significant improvements with school engagement in comparison to previous years, however there is still a lot of work that needs to be done to ensure school engagement is the best it can be.

Overall, school engagement with the academic representation system remained positive throughout the year. Whilst levels of engagement varied between schools, the majority met or exceeded the training benchmark and continued to actively participate in key elements of the representation system.

One notable improvement was the submission of SAR details within the expected timeframe. 8 schools submitted complete rep information prior to the end of teaching week 4, compared with 4 schools in the previous academic year. Whilst there remains further work to be undertaken in this area, the increase demonstrates positive progress towards ensuring SARs can access training, resources and support at the earliest opportunity.

The submission of SSP minutes remains one of the most significant challenges within the academic representation system. 15 schools fully submitted SSP 1 minutes through SVEN, compared with 9 schools for SSP 2 and 5 schools for SSP 3. Whilst these figures represent small improvements on the previous academic year, they demonstrate a continued decline in compliance as the year progresses. Discussions through the school meetings project (project outline later in this report) highlighted that staff capacity, administrative resourcing and organisational change continue to influence the ability of schools to consistently complete and submit SSP documentation.

Despite these challenges, several schools demonstrated particularly strong engagement across multiple areas of the academic representation system. High levels of training completion, timely submission of information and strong SSP compliance demonstrate that effective academic representation can be achieved when dedicated resource, clear ownership and strong partnerships exist between schools, SARs and the Students' Union.

The findings from the compliance tracker and school meetings collectively highlight the importance of continuing to support schools through guidance, training and partnership working. As institutional transformation continues, maintaining effective student voice mechanisms will remain essential to ensuring that student feedback can be captured, escalated and acted upon effectively.

College	School	SAR details provided by Week 4	Number of Active Student Reps	Number of SARs completed Training	% Student Reps completed Training	Minutes of SSP 1 submitted to SVEN	Number of SSP 1 Minutes Received	Minutes of SSP 2 submitted to SVEN	Number of SSP 2 Minutes Received	Minutes of SSP 3 submitted to SVEN	Number of SSP 3 Minutes Received
	Benchmark	Yes	-	-	60%	Yes		Yes		Yes	
AHSS	CARBS	Partial	62	40	65%	Yes	4/4	Yes	4/4	Partial	2/4
	ENCAP	Yes	38	26	68%	Yes	5/5	Yes	5/5	Yes	5/5
	GEOPL	Yes	33	27	82%	Yes	2/2	Yes	2/2	Yes	2/2
	JOMEC	Yes	40	24	60%	Yes	2/2	Partial	1/2	No	0/2
	LAWPL	Partial	117	86	74%	Partial	2/4	Partial	2/4	Partial	2/4
	MLANG	Partial	52	43	83%	Partial	1/2	Partial	1/2	Partial	1/2
	MUSIC	Partial	9	9	100%	Yes	1/1	Yes	1/1	Yes	1/1
	SHARE	Yes	37	26	70%	Yes	5/5	Yes	2/2	Yes	5/5
	SOCSI	Partial	41	31	76%	Yes	3/3	Partial	2/3	Partial	2/3
	WELSH	Partial	9	5	56%	Yes	2/2	Yes	2/2	Yes	2/2
BLS	BIOSI	Partial	46	40	87%	Partial	1/3	No	0/3	No	0/3
	DENTL	Partial	29	23	79%	Partial	2/3	No	0/3	No	0/3
	HCARE	Partial	70	55	79%	Yes	8/8	Partial	5/8	No*	0/8*
	MEDIC	Partial	18	14	78%	Partial	1/3	Partial	1/3	No	1/3
	OPTOM	Partial	12	9	75%	Partial	1/2	Partial	1/2	No	0/2
	PHRMY	Partial	29	24	83%	Partial	3/4	Partial	2/4	Partial	1/4
	PSYCH	Yes	33	27	82%	Yes	2/2	Partial	1/2	No	0/2
PSE	ARCHI	Partial	38	32	84%	Yes	3/3	No	0/3	No	0/3
	CHEMY	Yes	23	17	74%	Yes	3/3	Yes	3/3	Partial	2/3
	COMSC	Partial	45	33	73%	Partial	2/3	Partial	2/3	Partial	2/3
	EARTH	Partial	42	39	93%	Yes	3/3	Partial	2/3	Partial	1/3
	ENGIN	Yes	85	63	74%	Yes	5/5	Yes	5/5	Partial	4/5
	MATHS	Yes	25	23	92%	Partial	1/2	Partial	1/2	Partial	1/2
	PHYSX	Partial	21	19	90%	Yes	3/3	Yes	3/3	No	0/3
	TOTAL	8 of 24	954	735	77%	15 of 24		9 of 24		5 of 24	



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Supporting Student Voice in Schools

School Meetings Project

During the 2025-26 academic year, the Student Voice Team and Student Voice and Partnership Team (formally Student Engagement Team) met with all 24 academic Schools to better understand how student voice and academic representation operate across the University. These meetings brought together Student Rep Coordinators (SRCs), Directors of Learning and Teaching (DLTs), and other colleagues with responsibility for student voice, engagement and experience.

The meetings explored a range of topics relating to the operation of the academic representation system, including Student Staff Panels (SSPs), SAR recruitment and retention, feedback mechanisms, wider student voice activity, and the potential impact of Hyb structures and school mergers. The discussions provided valuable insight into both the strengths of the current system and the challenges faced by schools in supporting effective student engagement.

Student Staff Panels

Across schools, SSPs were viewed as a valuable mechanism for engaging students and raising feedback. However, their effectiveness was found to depend heavily on preparation, clarity of purpose and the scale at which they operate.

Schools consistently reported that SSPs are most effective when they are student-led, supported through pre-meetings and structured agenda setting processes. Whilst smaller cohorts can often benefit from more personalised approaches, larger cohorts can face challenges in ensuring broad and representative student participation.

Recruitment and Retention

Discussions highlighted that recruitment challenges are often structural rather than motivational. Many schools reported difficulties engaging first-year students, postgraduate taught students and postgraduate researchers, with placements, workload pressures and academic timetables all impacting recruitment efforts.

Schools that use personalised approaches, such as direct staff recommendations and peer-to-peer encouragement, reported greater success in recruiting and retaining SARs. There was also recognition that over-reliance on continuing SARs can limit diversity of perspectives within the system.

The Feedback Loop

The meetings identified closing the feedback loop as one of the most challenging aspects of the academic representation system. While feedback is frequently raised through established channels, schools reported that limited administrative capacity, unclear ownership of actions and competing priorities can make it difficult to communicate outcomes back to students.

Participants highlighted the importance of simple and visible communication methods, such as newsletter updates, digital communications and teaching slides, to demonstrate how student feedback has informed decision making and improvements.

Challenges Facing Student Voice

Many of the challenges identified by schools were linked to resourcing, organisational change and staff capacity rather than a lack of commitment to student engagement.

Schools highlighted concerns around reduced professional services support, increasing workloads and the impact of ongoing organisational change. Staff also noted that students can feel increasingly disconnected from their schools, academic communities and physical spaces, creating additional challenges in maintaining engagement and fostering a sense of belonging.

Wider Student Voice Activity

The meetings demonstrated that many schools utilise a range of approaches beyond formal representation structures to gather student feedback and promote engagement. Informal activities such as coffee mornings, drop-in sessions and student-led communication channels were commonly highlighted as valuable complements to SSPs.

Schools also emphasised the importance of personal relationships between students and named members of staff, noting that successful student voice activity often depends upon clear ownership and accountability.

Hyb Structures and School Mergers

A significant theme throughout the meetings was the potential impact of Hyb structures and School mergers on Student Voice and representation. Whilst Schools recognised opportunities for collaboration and consistency, there was widespread uncertainty regarding how student engagement structures would operate within new organisational arrangements.

Particular concerns centred around maintaining discipline-specific knowledge, protecting specialist student voices and ensuring students continue to have meaningful opportunities to engage with staff and decision-makers. Many schools emphasised that student voice should be intentionally designed into future structures rather than considered as a secondary consideration.

Key Areas for Improvement

Whilst schools expressed strong support for the existing academic representation system, discussions highlighted several areas where improvements could strengthen student engagement:

- Maintaining or reinstating local student experience and professional services support.
- Simplifying processes and reducing duplication of feedback collection.
- Improving clarity around timelines, responsibilities and outcomes.
- Providing earlier and more comprehensive training for both reps and staff involved in SSPs

Emerging Good Practice

Whilst approaches varied across Schools, the discussions identified several common features of effective Student Voice practice. Schools that reported strong engagement often utilised pre-SSP meetings, informal discussions with Representatives between meetings, and clear approaches to closing the feedback loop with students. Several Schools highlighted the value of allowing SARs to prepare agendas in advance, meet with staff ahead of SSPs and receive support in developing their confidence and leadership skills.

A number of Schools also demonstrated innovative approaches to communication and community building. These included dedicated Learning Central spaces, Microsoft Teams channels, WhatsApp groups, student-led workshops, cohort meetings, mentoring schemes and end-of-year celebration events. Schools reported that these activities helped strengthen relationships between SARs, staff and students whilst maintaining engagement throughout the academic year.

Perhaps the most consistent finding was the importance of strong local ownership. Schools with dedicated Student Experience or Professional Services support, clear responsibilities for Student Voice activity and regular opportunities for staff-student dialogue generally reported stronger engagement and more effective representation structures. Across the project, successful Student Voice activity was frequently linked to visible staff support, established relationships and opportunities for informal engagement alongside formal committee structures.

The School Meetings project provided one of the most comprehensive reviews of academic representation undertaken in recent years. The findings highlighted both the strength of existing student voice activity and the challenges facing schools during a period of organisational change. Insights gathered through the meetings will directly inform future developments of the academic representation system, support provided to schools, and the ongoing partnership between the Students' Union and the University.

Student Voice & Experience Network

The Student Voice & Experience Network (SVEN) continued to play an important role in supporting the Academic Representation Scheme throughout the 2025-26 academic year. SVEN provides a central platform for Schools to record Student Staff Panel (SSP) activity, monitor progress against agreed actions and share information relating to Student Voice and student experience.

Throughout the year, schools used SVEN to submit SSP minutes, action updates and examples of student voice activity. The platform continued to provide a consistent mechanism for recording and monitoring feedback raised through the academic representation system, supporting transparency and accountability across Schools.

Feedback gathered through the School Meetings Project highlighted that whilst SVEN remains a valuable tool, levels of engagement vary between Schools and opportunities exist to further embed its use within local Student Voice processes. Continued promotion of the platform,

alongside support and guidance for staff, will help ensure SVEN remains an effective resource for capturing, tracking and evidencing the impact of student feedback across Cardiff University.

Student Academic Rep Feedback

The end-of-year survey provides Student Academic Reps the chance to provide feedback on their experience in the role, with both structured questions and free-text questions. The questions that make up the survey can be found in Appendix A and the data in a graphical form can be found in Appendix B.

The feedback from Student Academic Representatives highlights several key areas of success and opportunities for improvement in the academic representation system. The data indicates high levels of engagement and satisfaction among SARs, with specific areas identified for further enhancements. The survey received 584 responses, representing more than half of all active SARs during the 2025-26 academic year.

Key Findings

Training and Preparation: SARs responded positively regarding the training provided by the Students' Union, with the majority of respondents indicating that they felt well prepared to undertake their responsibilities. Training completion also increased to 77% this year.

Support: SARs reported high levels of support throughout their time in role. Support from University staff received an average rating of 4.33/5, whilst support from the Students' Union received an average rating of 3.93/5.

Student Staff Panels: Student Staff Panels continued to be viewed positively by SARs, with approximately 92% of respondents indicating that SSPs were either very useful or somewhat useful in enabling them to raise feedback and contribute to improvements.

Skills and Personal Development: SARs consistently highlighted the development of transferable skills including communication, confidence, leadership, teamwork and advocacy. reps also identified the value of the role in supporting future career aspirations and personal development.

Value of the Role: The role of Student Academic Representative continues to be viewed as highly valuable, receiving an average score of 4.39/5 when respondents were asked how valuable SARs are to the student experience.

Challenges

Whilst feedback regarding the Academic Representation Scheme remained overwhelmingly positive, several recurring challenges were identified through the survey.

Closing the Feedback Loop: Consistent findings highlighted closing the feedback loop as one of the most challenging aspects of the role. Whilst many reps felt that issues raised were listened to and acted upon, there was a continued desire for clearer communication regarding

outcomes, timescales and actions taken in response to student feedback. SARs frequently reported difficulties demonstrating impact to their cohorts when updates were not communicated consistently or visibly.

Visibility of SARs: A number of SARs highlighted challenges relating to the visibility of the role within Schools and programmes. SARs reported that students were often unsure who their reps were, what the role involved, or how feedback could be raised. SARs suggested that greater promotion of SARs through School communications, Learning Central and teaching sessions could help improve awareness and engagement.

Barriers to Participation: SARs identified several factors which limited participation in student voice activities, including timetable clashes, placement commitments, employment, extracurricular activities and competing academic priorities. These barriers were particularly evident for students on professional programmes, postgraduate students and those studying alongside external commitments.

Gathering Representative Feedback: Many SARs reported challenges when collecting feedback from their cohorts, particularly within larger programmes and postgraduate communities. SARs noted that engagement can be difficult when students are unaware of their representatives or do not feel motivated to engage with feedback opportunities. Several SARs suggested additional guidance, resources and digital tools to support feedback collection and improve engagement with the wider student body.

Free text summary

SARs were invited to provide additional comments on their experiences within the role and suggest improvements for the future. Responses reflected a strong sense of commitment to representing fellow students and demonstrated the positive impact that SARs believe the role has on both the student experience and their own personal development.

Many SARs described the opportunity to represent their peers and contribute to positive change as the most rewarding aspect of the role. SARs frequently highlighted occasions where feedback had led to meaningful improvements within their schools and programmes, reinforcing the value of student voice and partnership working.

Personal and professional development was another recurring theme throughout the responses. SARs reported developing a range of transferable skills including communication, confidence, leadership, teamwork and problem-solving. A number of respondents also highlighted how the role had provided valuable experience that could be applied to future employment and leadership opportunities.

Several SARs also valued the relationships developed through the role. Positive interactions with fellow SARs, school staff and SU staff were frequently referenced, with many commenting that these relationships helped them feel more connected to their academic community and empowered to raise issues on behalf of students.

Looking Forward

Updates from 2024-25 recommendations

Before considering the recommendations for the upcoming academic year, it is vital to acknowledge and understand the work and progress that has taken place over this academic year. Every year, in partnership with university we set recommendations that have the aim to continuously improve the academic representation system. The table below shows the recommendations that were set in the academic 2024-25 and the updates and progress that have been made towards them. It is important to know that the system is continually aiming to update and improve, whilst all actions may not be complete, they still have had a significant positive impact on the representation system. The end-of-year survey provides Student Academic Reps the chance to provide feedback on their experience in the role, with both structured questions and free-text questions. The questions that make up the survey can be found in Appendix A and the data in a graphical form can be found in Appendix B.

The feedback from Student Academic Representatives highlights several key areas of success and opportunities for improvement in the academic representation system. The data indicates high levels of engagement and satisfaction among SARs, with specific areas identified for further enhancement.

Area for consideration	Feedback and data	Actions	Updates
PGR Representation	In the end of year survey, several SARs echoed the point of needing more PGR specific support. Feedback raised to Vice President Postgraduate Students also highlighted the additional needs PGR Reps have	The Students' Union will investigate PGR resources and what we can do to support those students with their specific needs. The SU and SET will engage with schools to ensure all PGR SAR details are provided on SVEN	The Students' Union worked in partnership with the Vice President Postgraduate Students to develop PGR-specific recruitment resources, which have been delivered in postgraduate spaces. Dedicated PGR Representative training has also been developed and will be introduced during the 2026/27 academic year.
Community and Collaboration	Many SARs in the end of year survey asked for more networking and support in connecting Reps with one another across the university	The Students' Union will organise more activities and networking events for Reps, to provide new opportunities for SARs to meet each other and collaborate on projects together. This will include the creation and exploration of Academic Communities between SARs and academic societies.	Initial work was undertaken to explore the Academic Communities project, with further research and development planned for the upcoming academic year. In partnership with the Learning and Teaching Academy, the Students' Union also delivered Student Leader Celebration events to recognise and connect student leaders across the University.



SAR skill development	In the end of year survey, several SARs indicated that they would like further training opportunities. To help them build their skills & confidence and to stay informed.	The Student' Union will continue and further develop Student Leader Sessions – an opportunity for Reps (and other student leaders) to come together and learn new skills & knowledge. Sessions will look to invite external speakers to enhance knowledge and skills beyond university life.	A range of Student Leader Sessions were delivered throughout the academic year, providing opportunities for Representatives to develop their skills and knowledge. Following lower than anticipated engagement levels, the delivery model and format of these sessions will be reviewed to maximise participation and impact.
Barriers to participation	186 SARs in the end of year survey expressed that there had been a barrier to them participating in SSPs this academic year.	The Students' Union and Student Engagement team will investigate SRC resources and guidance. Providing guidance on running SSPs and when SSPs could be. Additionally offering support to SARs who have missed SSPs, providing guidance on how to still submit feedback collected.	Regular updates and guidance were provided through the monthly SVEN staff newsletter. Representatives were also encouraged during training to share feedback directly with their School when unable to attend meetings. The introduction of Pre-SSPs has provided an additional mechanism for Representatives to submit feedback and contribute to discussions.



Communication: Reps and Stakeholders	Expressed through the end of year survey, SARs feel constrained by higher university decision-making processes, which limits their ability to effect change. SARs want involvement in decision-making throughout the University's committee structure.	The Students' Union and Student Engagement Team will investigate and review the Representation structure(s) within the SU and the University. The SU and SET will then make recommendations for any potential new pilot academic representations structures. The SU will also review the communication between Reps and stakeholders (university, SU Officers and other SARs)	Consideration of recommendations for a revised representation structure has been paused due to wider institutional transformation activity. The Student Voice Team and Student Voice and Partnership Team will continue to monitor developments and review representation arrangements within emerging University structures before undertaking further consultation and review.
SRC Engagement & Support	Staff, including SRCs, have expressed a need for improved support and communication regarding the scheme and their role. There have been several SRCs who are unaware they hold the role.	The SET in partnership with the SU will work to increase SRC engagement, especially at SRC training sessions they will also ensure regular communication with SRCs. The SET and the SU will also ensure that SRCs know SVEN to be the place where they can ask questions, view support & guidance and share best practice.	Regular updates have been provided through the monthly SVEN staff newsletter. Training opportunities have been delivered for SRCs, and year-round guidance and support continue to be available through SVEN and the Student Voice and Partnership Team



Student Staff Panel Minutes	With the currently established Student Staff panels across the schools, there should have been over 250 minutes submitted to SVEN, this year only 154 minutes were received. SSP minutes are to be shared to SVEN in line with Cardiff University Academic Regulations.	The SET and the SU will work with SRCs and schools to ensure minutes are uploaded to SVEN by providing training and guidance to staff involved in academic representation	Student Staff Panel minute submission rates have improved during the reporting period. The Student Voice and Partnership Team and Students Voice Team will continue to support Schools and SRCs through guidance, training and ongoing communication to further improve compliance with University requirements.
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Student Rep Townhalls

Following feedback from Student Academic Representatives and a review of engagement activity within the Academic Representation system, the Students' Union will introduce a new Student Rep Town Hall model for the 2026-27 academic year, replacing the previous College Forum structure.

College Forums have historically provided an important mechanism for SARs to discuss issues affecting students with Students' Union Sabbatical Officers and University colleagues. However, engagement levels varied across forums, and discussions often became focused on providing updates rather than facilitating meaningful dialogue between representatives. In reviewing the structure, there was an opportunity to create a more flexible and collaborative space that would encourage broader participation and enable representatives to engage in discussions about the wider student experience.

The Student Rep Town Hall model has been designed to create a more open and interactive environment where representatives can share experiences, identify common themes across Schools and programmes, celebrate examples of good practice, and discuss emerging issues affecting students. Unlike the previous model, which was limited to SSP Chairs and Vice Chairs, Town Halls are open to all Student Academic Representatives. This change aims to ensure that a broader range of student perspectives can contribute to discussions and provide greater insight into the experiences of students across each College.

Town Halls will focus on thematic discussion rather than formal reporting and will provide opportunities for representatives to:

- Share feedback and emerging issues from their courses and Schools.
- Identify common themes affecting students across colleges.
- Highlight successful initiatives and examples of good practice.
- Explore collaborative solutions to shared challenges.
- Raise matters that may require discussion beyond School level.
- Engage directly with Students' Union Sabbatical Officers, College Education Teams and University colleagues.

To further improve the quality and relevance of discussions, representatives will be invited to submit questions, concerns and discussion topics in advance of each Town Hall. This will enable agendas to be shaped around the issues most important to students and support more focused and productive conversations.

The introduction of Student Rep Town Halls reflects a continued commitment to strengthening student engagement and ensuring that the Academic Representation system remains responsive, accessible and effective in supporting student voice across Cardiff University.

Supporting Schools & Student Voice

The findings of this report demonstrate that successful academic representation relies upon effective partnership working between SARs, schools, the Students' Union and the University. Throughout the academic year, schools continued to show a strong commitment to student engagement despite the challenges associated with organisational change, competing priorities and reductions in local resource.

The School Meetings Project highlighted that schools value the academic representation scheme and recognise the importance of student voice in informing decision-making and enhancing the student experience. However, discussions also identified a need for continued support in several key areas, including representative recruitment, feedback mechanisms, Student Staff Panel administration and the communication of outcomes to students.

In response, the Students' Union and Student Engagement Team will continue to work closely with schools and Student Rep Coordinators to provide guidance, training and opportunities to share effective practice. Focus will be placed on supporting Schools through organisational change, strengthening approaches to closing the feedback loop and ensuring that Student Voice remains embedded within new structures and ways of working.

As Cardiff University continues to evolve, maintaining strong partnerships between students, schools and professional services will remain essential. By continuing to invest in communication, collaboration and support, the academic representation scheme can remain responsive, effective and capable of ensuring that student perspectives continue to inform the development of the University.

Priorities for 2026-27

There have been significant areas of improvement and growth within the academic representation system this year, however there are some areas of consideration to help the system evolve and grow next year. These considerations have been made considering feedback provided by SARs, recommendations from previous years and sector benchmarks.

Area for consideration	Feedback and data	Actions	Team Responsible
Student Voice During Transformation	School Meetings identified significant uncertainty regarding Hyb structures, School mergers and future Student Voice arrangements. Staff expressed concerns regarding the potential loss of local knowledge, discipline-specific understanding and opportunities for meaningful student engagement.	The Students' Union and Student Voice and Partnership Team will work with Schools and the University to ensure Student Voice is embedded within emerging structures. Guidance and support will be developed to help maintain effective student engagement during periods of organisational change.	Student Voice Team Student Voice and Partnership Team Academic Schools
Closing the Feedback Loop	School Meetings and Student Academic Representative feedback highlighted continuing challenges in communicating outcomes and actions back to students. Schools cited limited capacity, lack of clear ownership and competing priorities as barriers to effective follow-up.	The Students' Union and Student Voice and Partnership Team will develop guidance, resources and examples of good practice to support Schools in effectively communicating actions and outcomes to students.	Student Voice Team Student Voice and Partnership Team



Participation and Accessibility	Student Academic Representatives identified barriers to participation, including timetable clashes, placements and competing commitments. Schools also reported recruitment challenges within PGT and PGR student populations.	The Students' Union will launch Student Rep Town Halls and explore additional opportunities for Representatives to participate in student voice activity. Particular focus will be placed on increasing engagement among postgraduate students and reducing barriers to participation.	Student Voice Team
Welsh Representation	Representative recruitment and engagement within Welsh-medium programmes remains lower than expected. Compliance data highlights Welsh Representation as an area requiring additional focus to ensure Welsh-speaking students can access support, training and representation opportunities through the medium of Welsh	The Students' Union will develop Welsh-medium Student Academic Representative training and review Welsh-language resources to improve accessibility and engagement. The Students' Union will also work with Schools to increase the recruitment of Welsh-speaking Representatives, with the aim of each School having at least two Welsh-speaking Student Academic Representatives.	Student Voice Team



Representative Development and Resources	Student Academic Representatives expressed a desire for additional development opportunities, guidance and support to help them build confidence within their role. Feedback also highlighted the need for resources that can be accessed flexibly throughout the academic year.	The Students' Union will develop a bank of pre-recorded development resources and guidance for Student Academic Representatives. Resources will be released at key points throughout the academic year, providing Representatives with timely support around topics such as gathering feedback, chairing meetings, closing the feedback loop and personal development.	Student Voice Team
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Appendices

Appendix A: End of year survey questions

At the end of the 2025-26 academic year, like years previous, all Student Academic Reps were invited to complete a feedback survey, to gather insight into areas for potential enhancement to the academic representation scheme in future. The full list of questions asked is as follows:

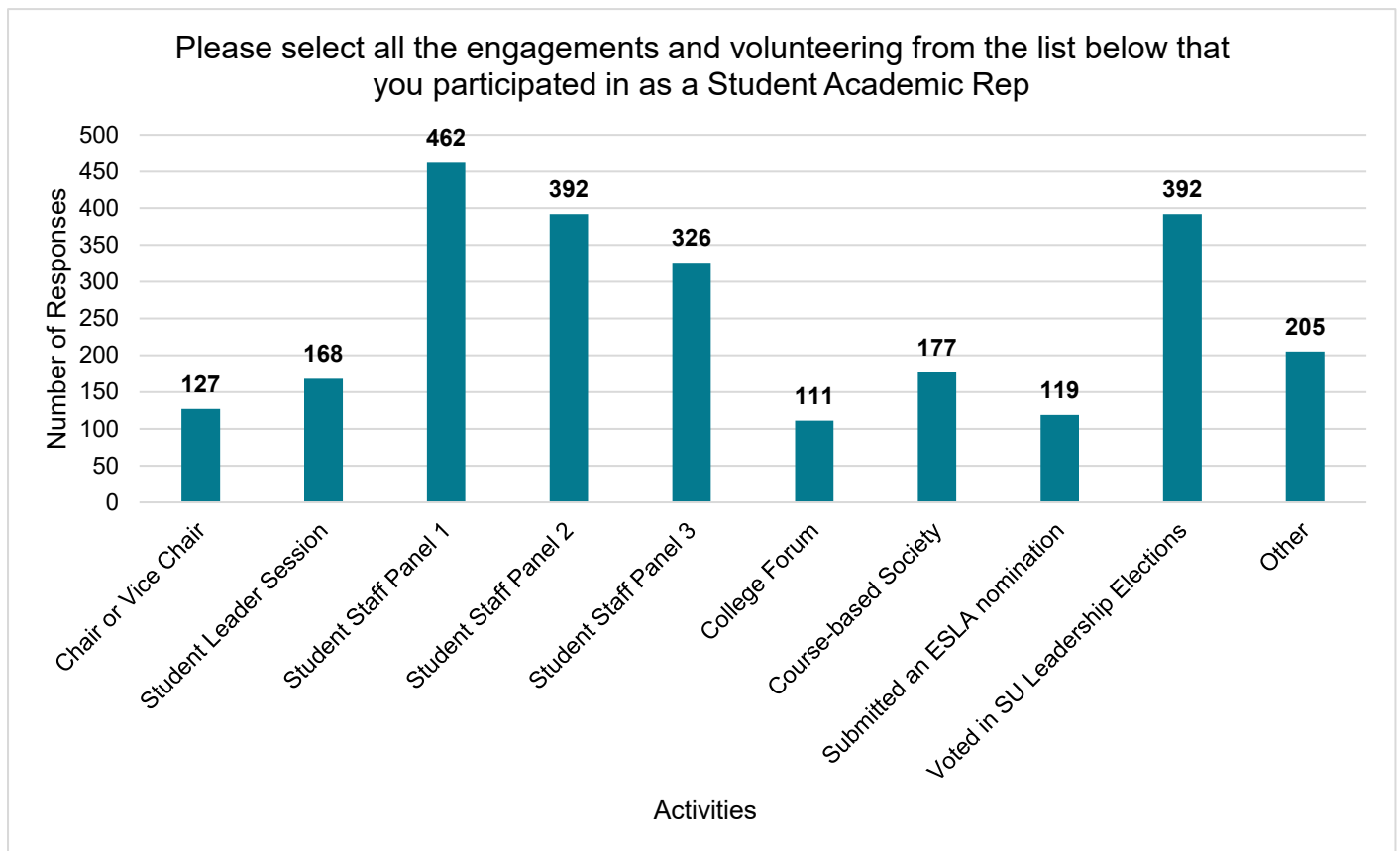
1. Please provide your name.
2. What School/Department are you in?
3. What course do you study?
4. What level of study are you?
5. What year of your course are you in?
6. Please select all the engagements and volunteering from the list below that you participated in as a Student Academic Rep:
 - Chair or Vice Chair
 - Student Leader Session
 - Student Staff Panel 1
 - Student Staff Panel 2
 - Student Staff Panel 3
 - College Forum
 - Course-based Society
 - Submitted an ESLA nomination
 - Voted in SU Leadership Elections
 - Other
7. Please provide the details of any other activity you have participated in as a Student Academic Rep
8. Prior to this academic year, have you previously been a Student Academic Rep?
9. How did you hear about the role of Student Academic Rep?
10. What motivated you to become a Student Academic Rep?
11. When you became a Student Academic Rep, were you made aware of the role and its responsibilities?
12. How well do you feel the training you received from the Students' Union prepared you for your role?
13. How would you describe the amount of communication you received from the Student Voice Team over the past academic year?
14. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

"The communication I received from the Student Voice team was useful in helping me in my role."

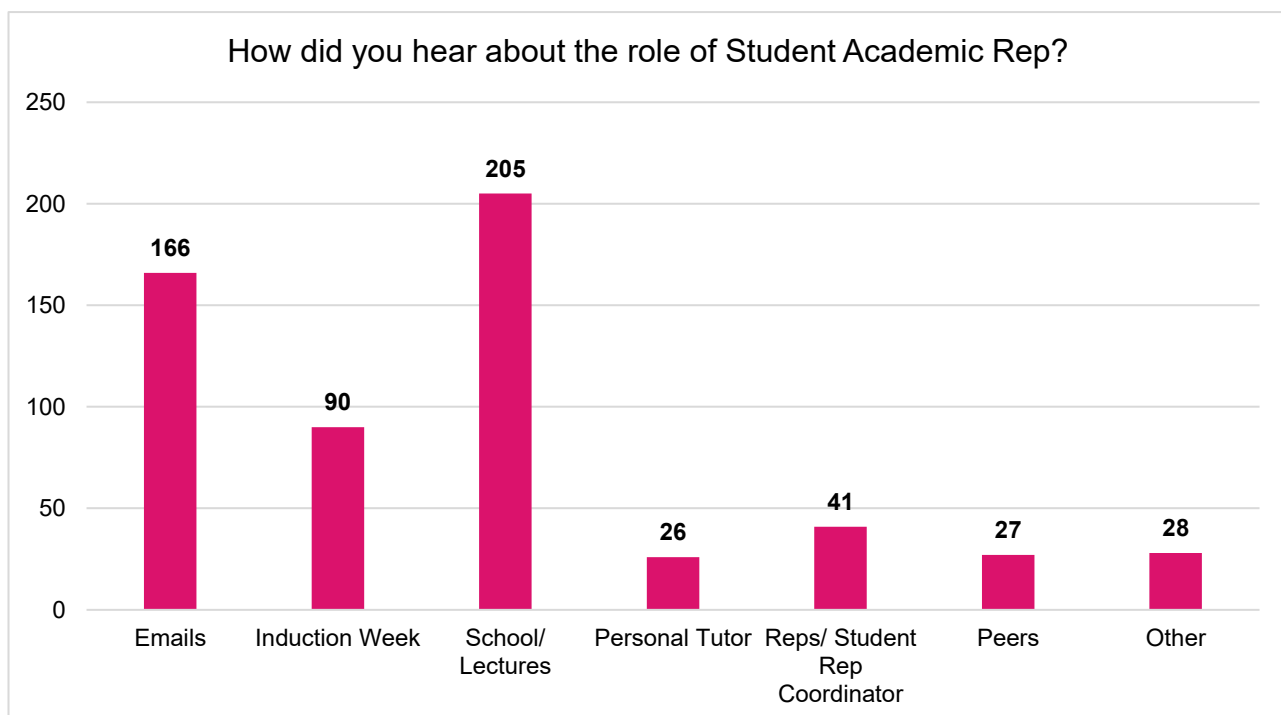
15. How supported have you felt by Students' Union staff during your time as a Student Academic Rep?
16. How supported have you felt by University staff during your time as a Student Academic Rep?
17. Have you been involved with any of the following activities/services run by the Students' Union this year?
 - Student Senate
 - Officer Executive Committee
 - AGM (Annual General Meeting)
 - Elections
 - Campaigns
 - Speak Week
 - Sports Club
 - Societies
 - Advice
 - Other
18. How useful have you found Student Staff Panels in allowing you to take forward feedback and have it acted upon?
19. Has there been anything that has restricted you from being able to attend Student Staff Panels this year?
20. Does the School provide adequate support in closing the feedback loop or communicating Student Staff Panels actions to students?
21. When feedback has been raised, to what extent, do you believe you have received an adequate response and/or solution from the appropriate university staff?
22. If you have taken on the role of Chair or Vice Chair this year, how confident did you feel in your responsibilities?
23. If you have attended a College Forum this year, how useful have you found the meetings in addressing feedback and reporting concerns?
24. Have you been asked by your School/College to sit on any additional committees across the year?
25. Do you believe your role has helped you to develop key transferable skills?

26. How valuable do you feel Student Academic Reps are to the student experience?
27. Do you think there are any improvements that could be made to the Academic Rep Scheme moving forward?
28. Do you have any other comments?

Appendix B: End of Year survey data graphics

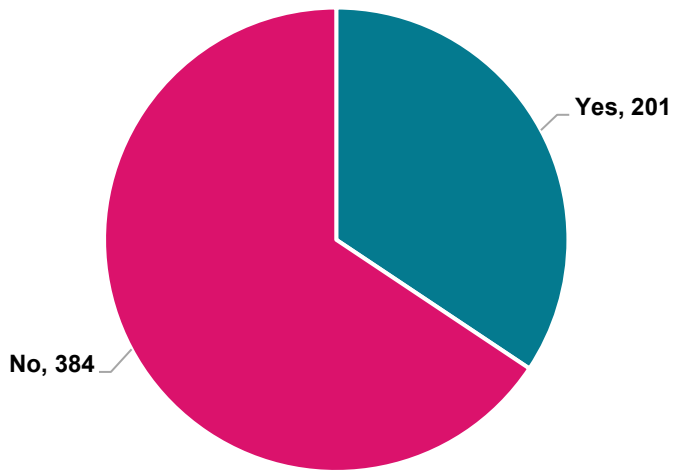


585 Student Academic Reps completed this question



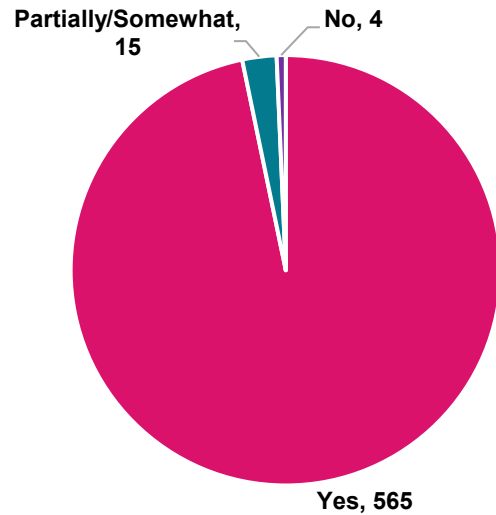
583 Student Academic Reps completed this question – this data represents the top 6 themes

Prior to this academic year, have you previously been a Student Academic Rep?



585 Student Academic Reps completed this question

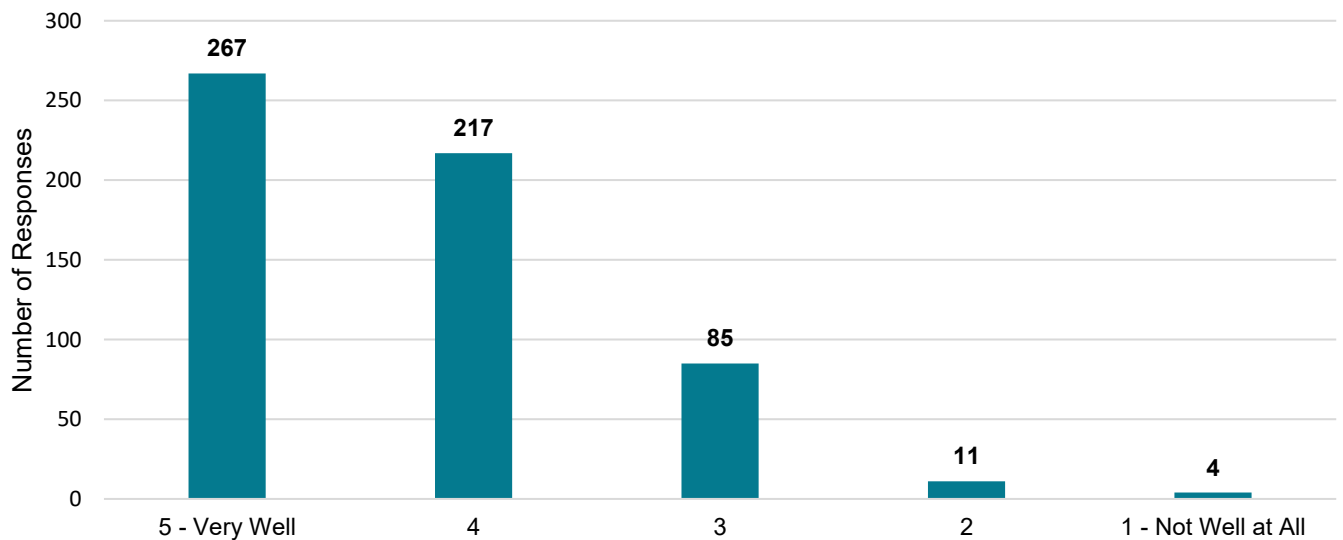
When you became a Student Academic Rep, were you made aware of the role and its responsibilities?



584 Student Academic Reps completed this question

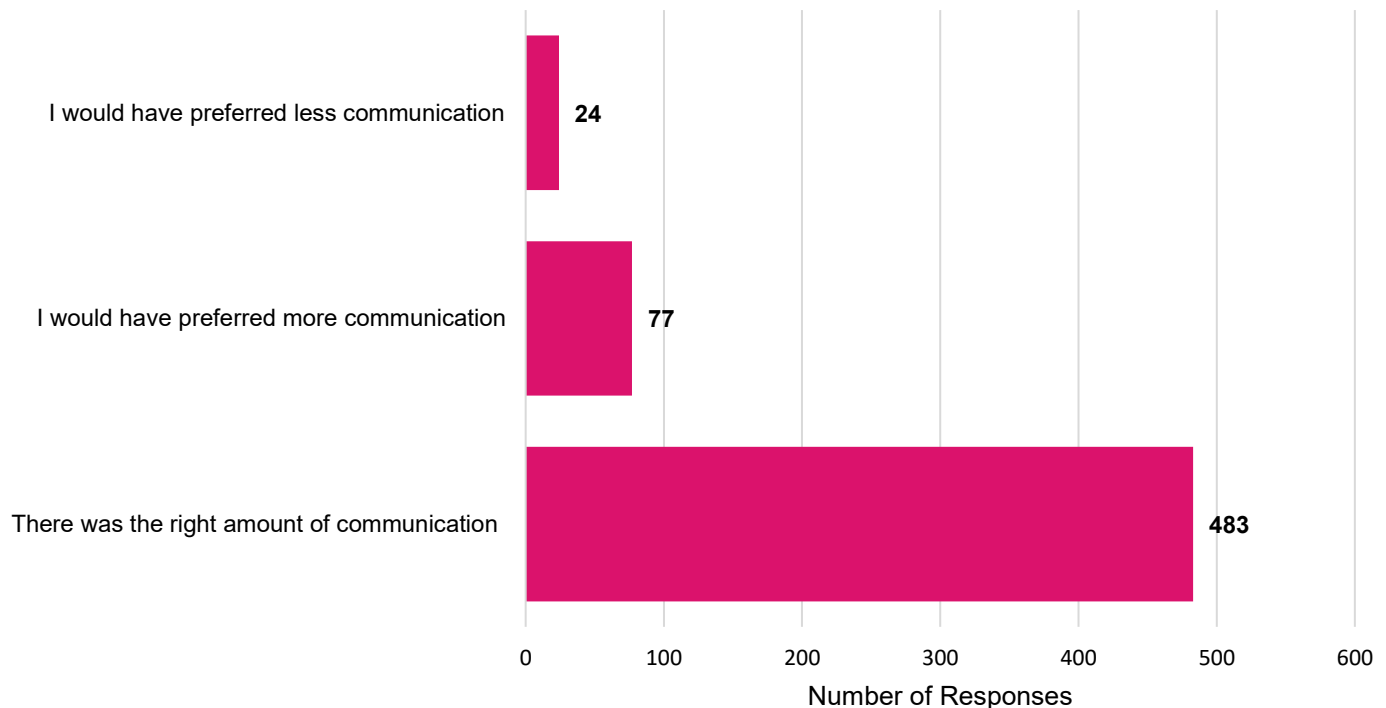
How well do you feel the training you received from the Students' Union prepared you for your role?

1- Not Well at all..... 5 - Very Well



584 Student Academic Reps completed this question

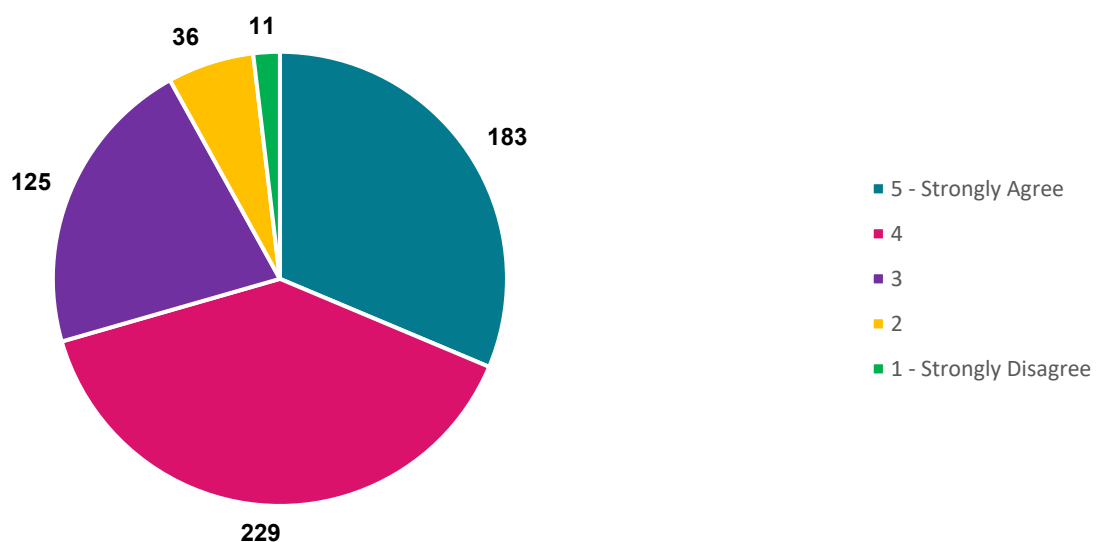
How would you describe the amount of communication you received from the Student Voice Team over the past academic year?



584 Student Academic Reps completed this question

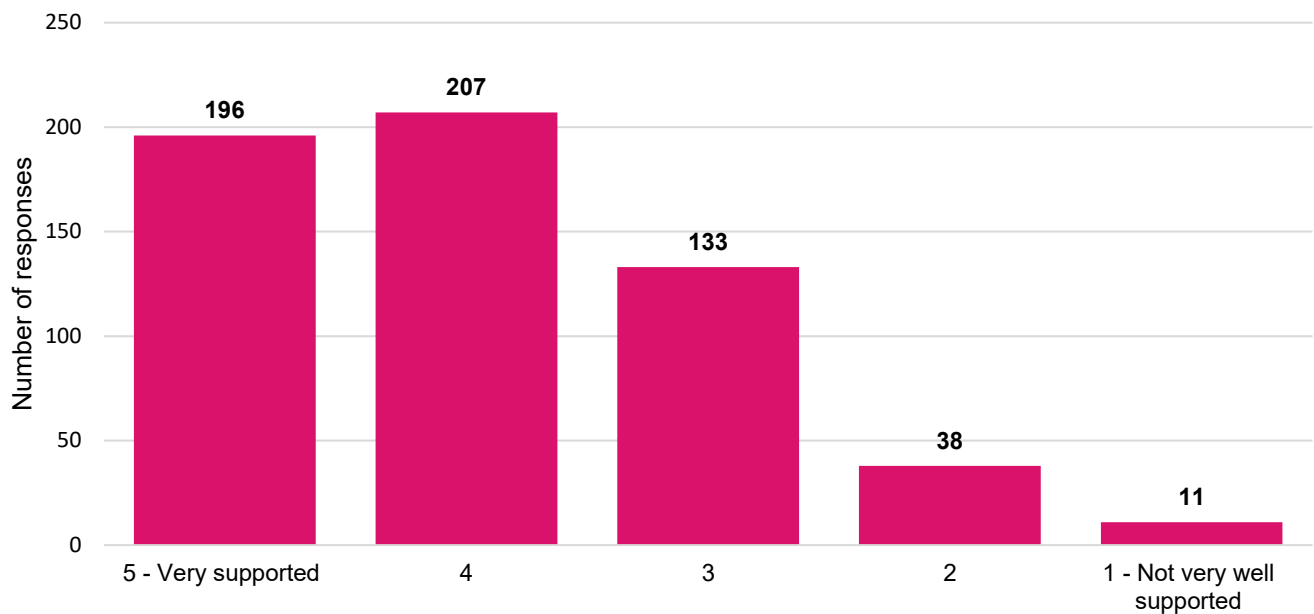
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?: 'The communication I received from the Student Voice was useful in helping me in my role'

1 - Strongly Disagree..... 5 - Strongly Agree



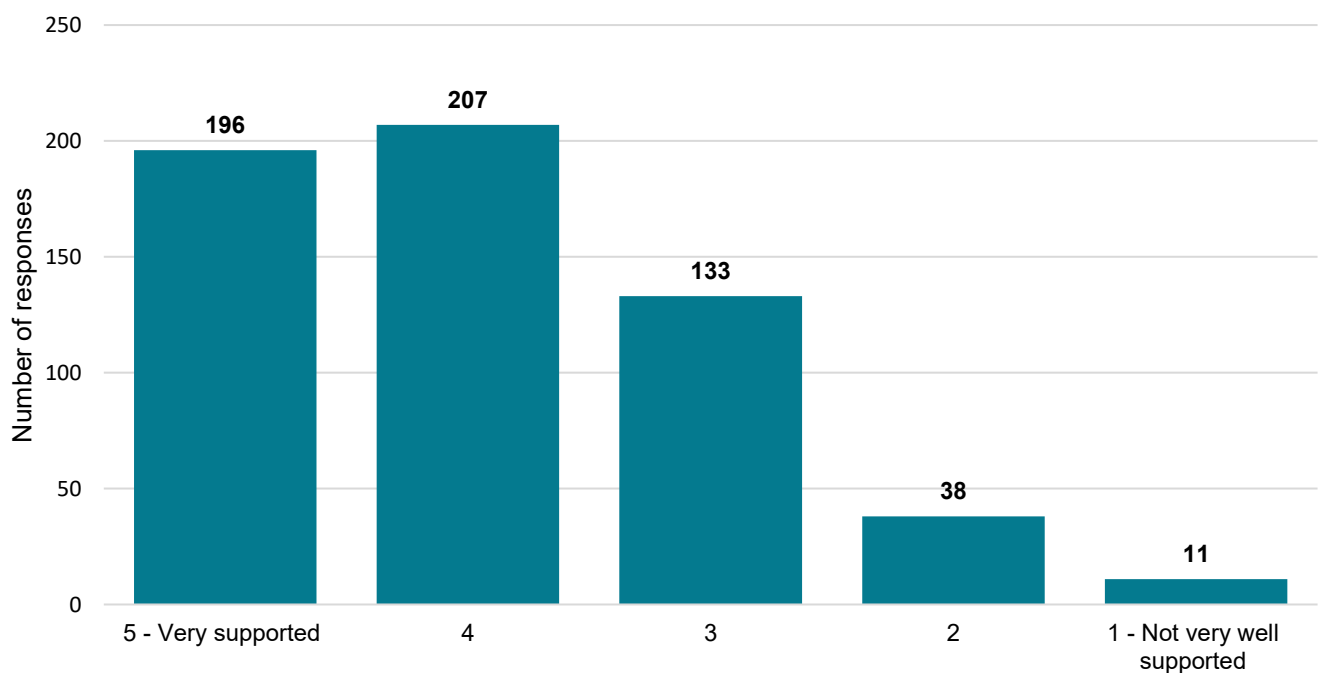
584 Student Academic Reps completed this question

How supported have you felt by Students' Union staff during your time as a Student Academic Rep?
1- Not Well..... 5 - Very Well

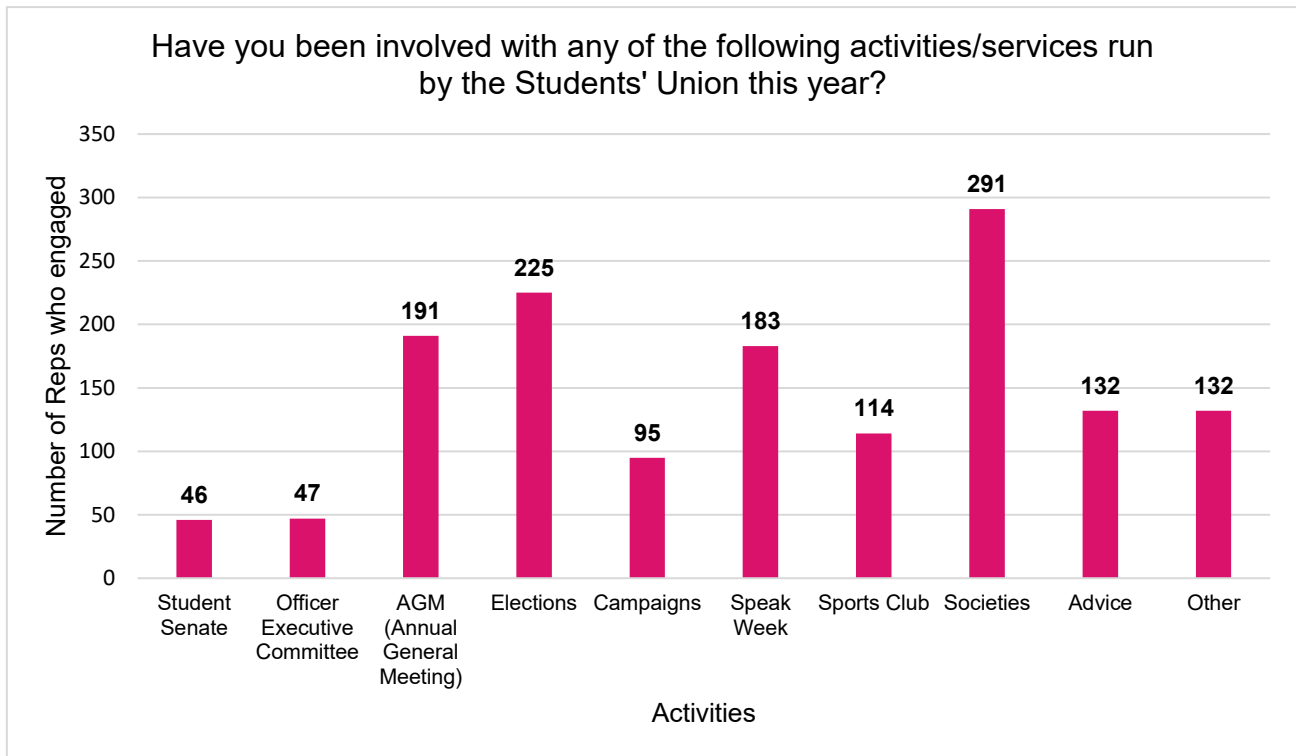


585 Student Academic Reps completed this question

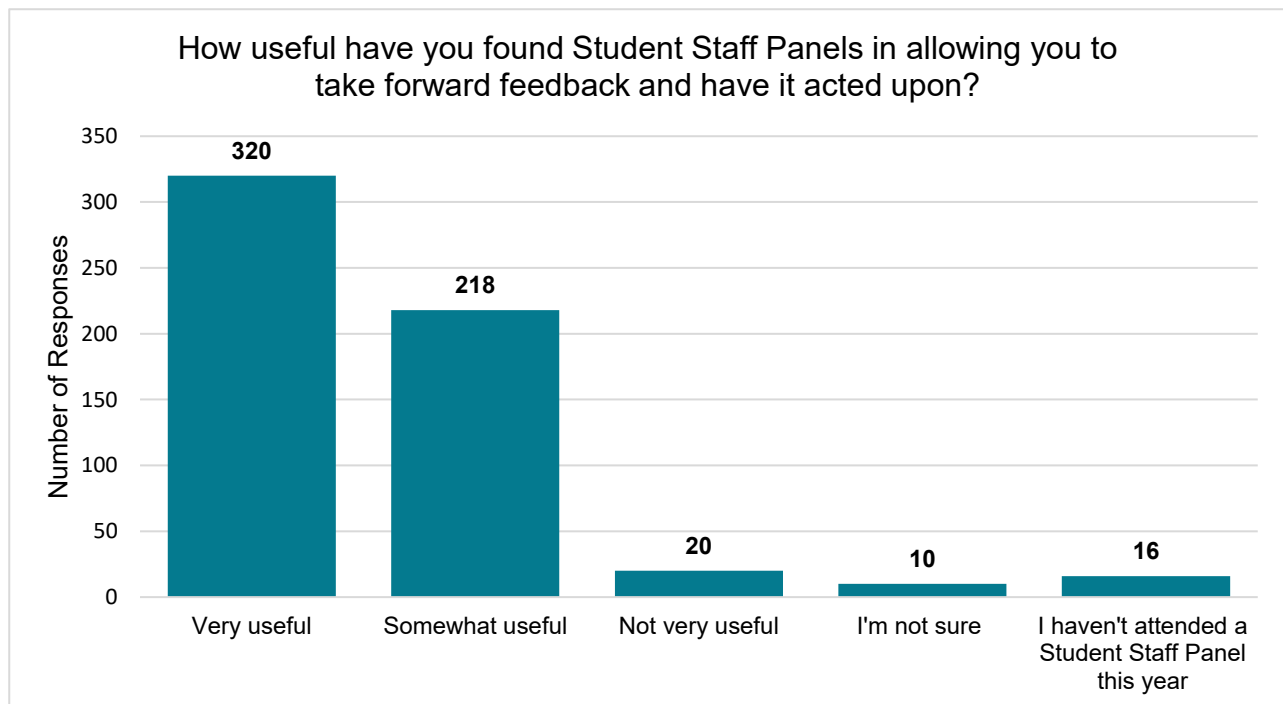
How supported have you felt by Students' Union staff during your time as a Student Academic Rep?
1- Not Well..... 5 - Very Well



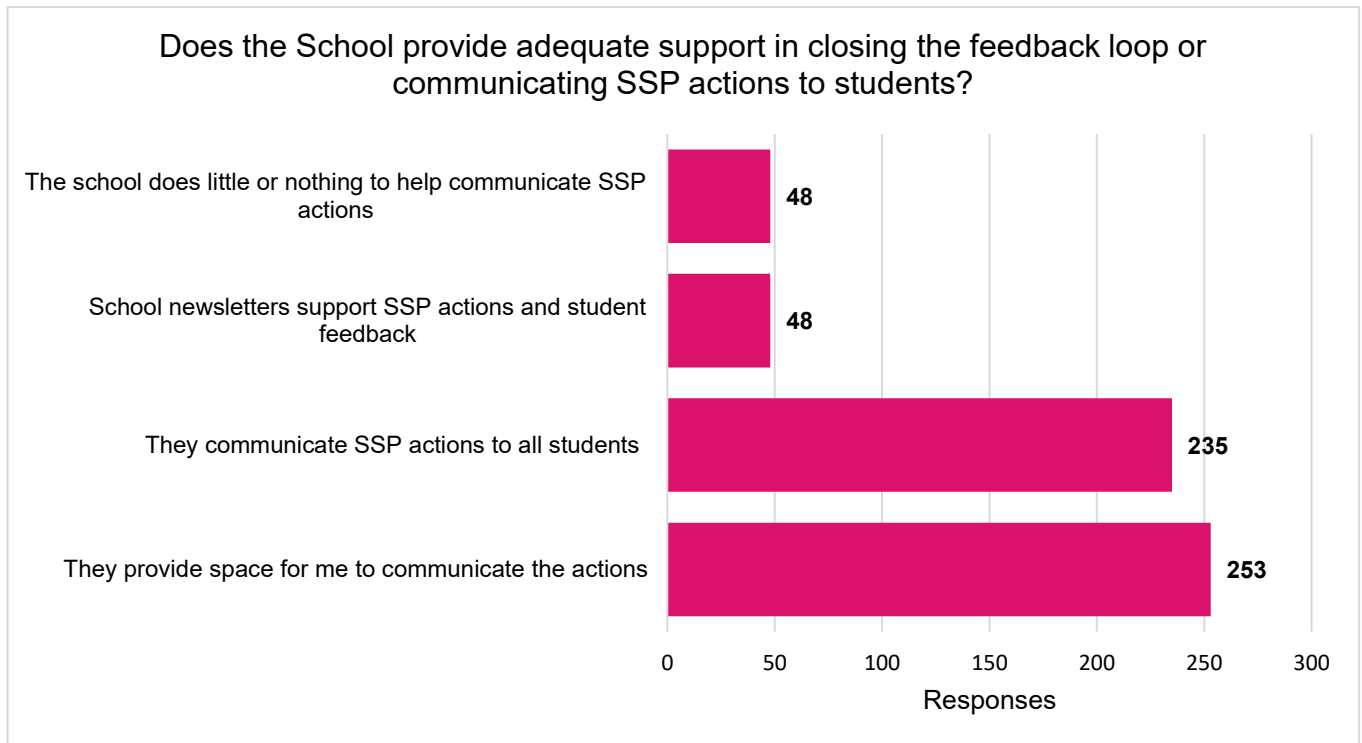
584 Student Academic Reps completed this question



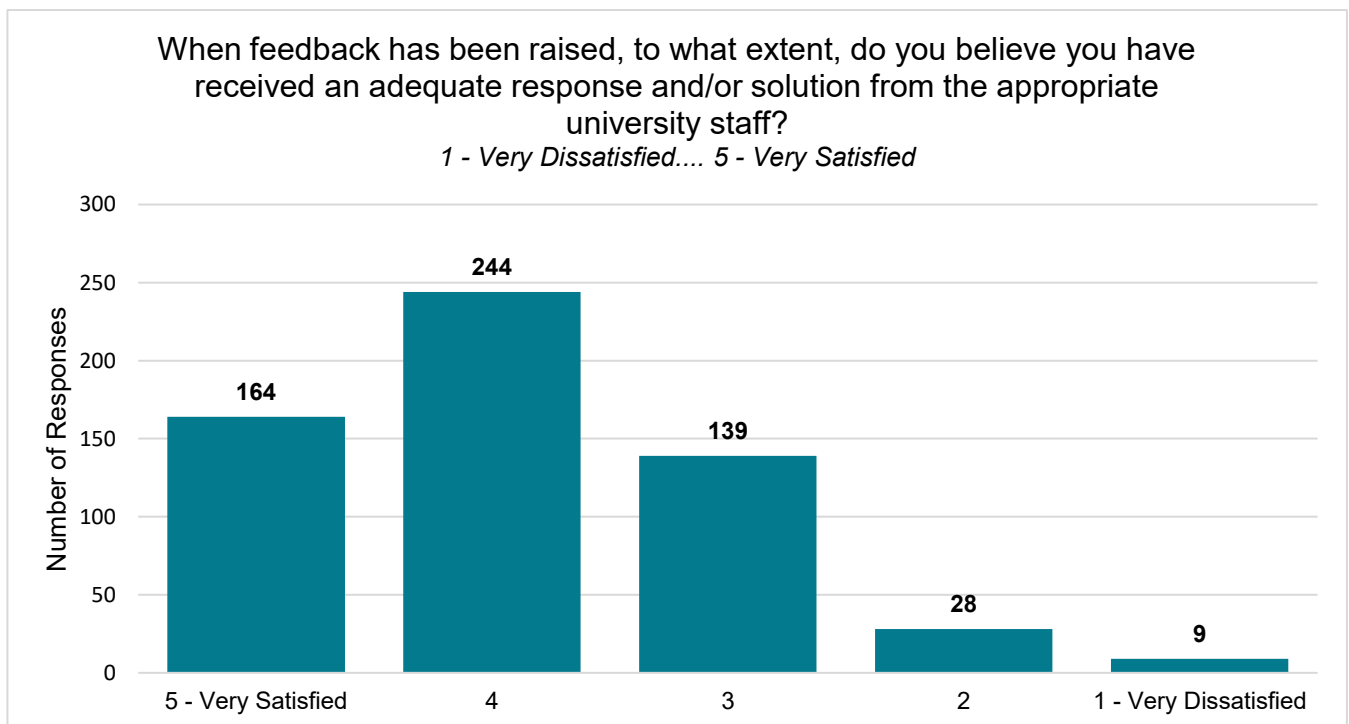
585 Student Academic Reps completed this question



584 Student Academic Reps completed this question

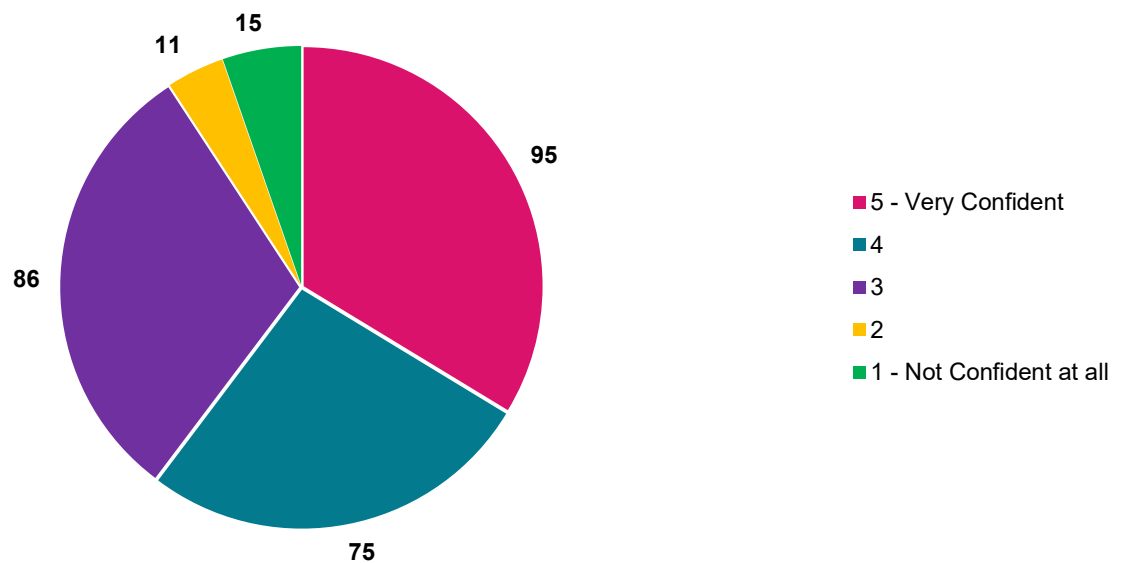


584 Student Academic Reps completed this question



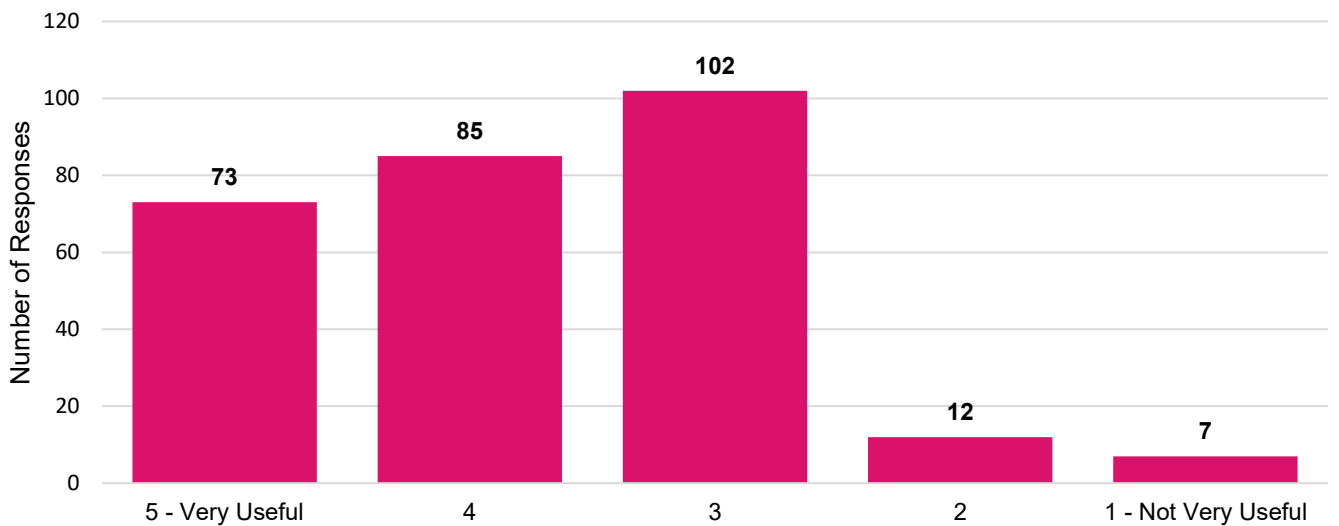
584 Student Academic Reps completed this question

If you have taken on the role of Chair or Vice Chair this year, how confident did you feel in your responsibilities?
1 - Not confident at all.... 5 - Very Confident



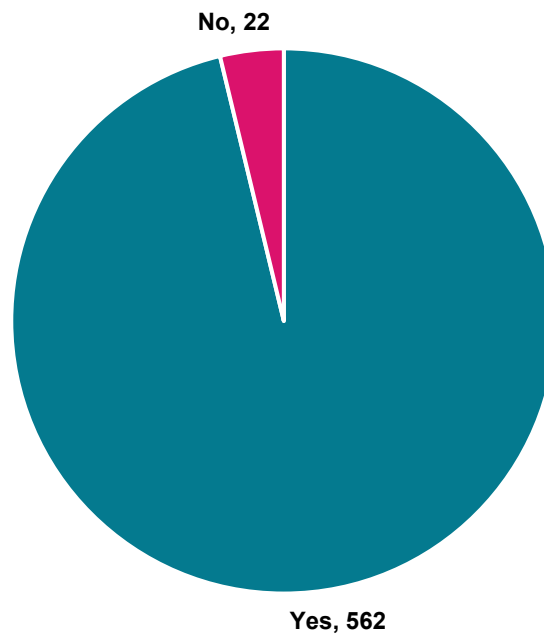
282 Student Academic Reps completed this question

If you have attended a College Forum this year, how useful have you found the meetings in addressing feedback and reporting concerns?
1 - Not very useful.... 5 - Very useful



279 Student Academic Reps completed this question

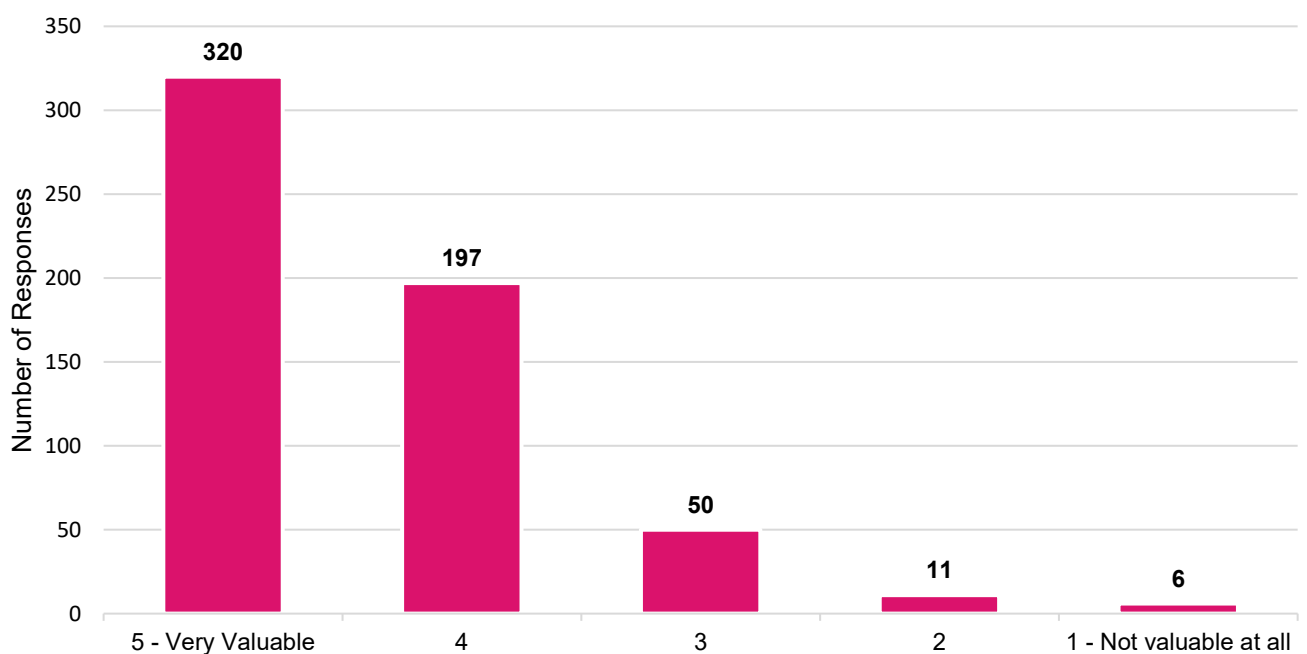
Do you believe your role has helped you to develop key transferable skills?



584 Student Academic Reps completed this question

How valuable do you feel Student Academic Reps are to the student experience?

1 - Not valuable at all.... 5 - Very valuable



584 Student Academic Reps completed this question

Appendix C: Links to all 2025-26 reports

Student Staff Panel- Semester 1 Summary: [Semester-1-Theme-summary.pdf](#)

Student Staff Panel- Semester 2 Summary: [SSP-semester-2-report.pdf](#)