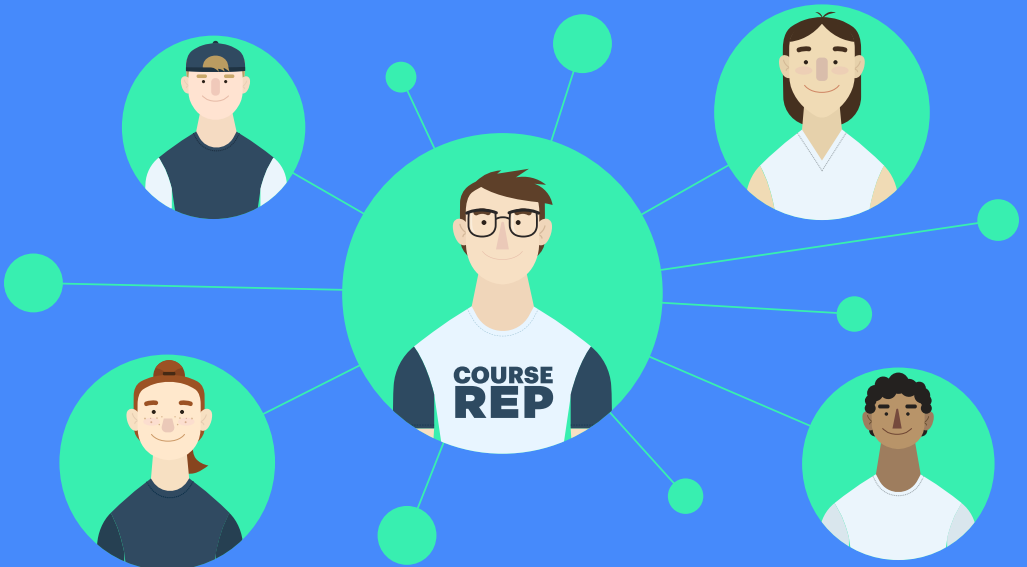


LUSA's Course Rep Handbook



Contents.

- 4. Purpose of the Course Rep System
- 6. What Do I Get Out of This?
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Introduction.

Congratulations on your election as a Course Rep!

We're pretty stoked to have you as part of the 'Student Voice' of Lincoln University, so thanks!

At LUSA you will find the Student Communities Coordinator — this is your first point of contact for anything you are unsure of, or just to check that you are on the right track. You can reach us at coursereps@lusa.org.nz or call on **03 423 0033**.

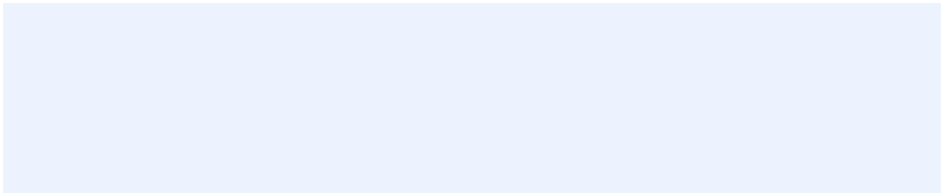
Better still drop into LUSA HQ on the ground floor in the Forbes Building where the we will happily have a yarn with you and give you all the help you need.

Exercise One.

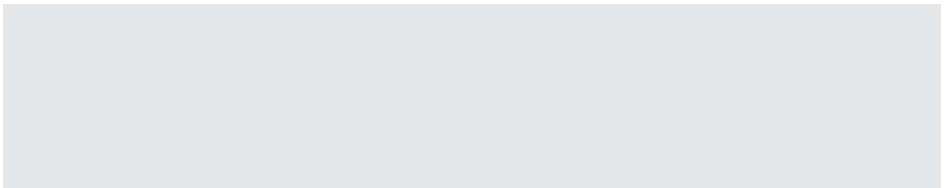
What does it mean to be a Course Rep?

The purpose of this exercise is to get you thinking about what it means to be a Course Rep; what you will be doing as a Rep; what are the skills you will need; and finally what the benefits are.

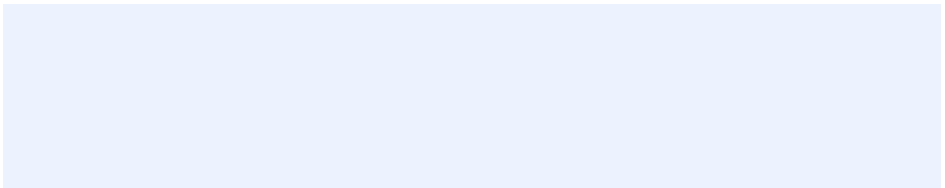
What do you think the **PURPOSE** of a Course Rep is?



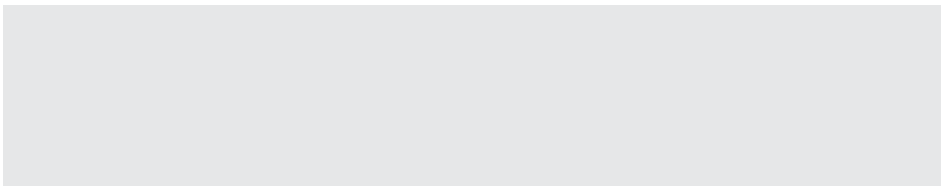
What do you think you will do?



What **SKILLS** do you think you'll need and develop?



How do you think being a Rep will **BENEFIT** you?



Purpose Of The System:

The Purpose of the Course Rep system is to ensure a quality experience for all Lincoln University Students. By becoming a Course Rep you are now helping to effect change to improve the quality of teaching and learning for you and your class.

Lincoln University and Lincoln University Students Association (LUSA) are committed to on-going improvements to your education and to make sure you have the best time whilst studying here!

You are the link between the students, academic staff, and the wider University.

- We raise the quality of teaching and learning
- We improve the outcomes for all students
- We make long lasting change for the better
- We help resolve issues at the lowest level

What Is Your Role?

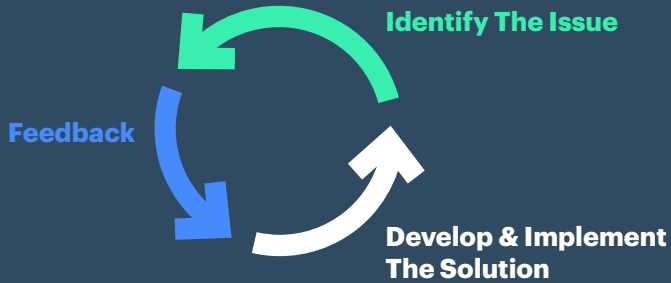
As a Course Rep your key role is to provide feedback to the University.

The most important thing you do, is gather information from your fellow students about all aspects of their course and their time at University.

The most important element of being a Course Rep is **COMMUNICATION**. If you can do this then you are already well on your way!

- You will discuss course and Uni matters with students, staff & LUSA.
- Approach lecturers to address any issues that may arise.
- Identify small issues before they become BIG issues.
- Ask for course feedback from members of your class & pass that on to the faculties and LUSA.
- Voice student opinions on University proposals.
- You are here to assist students with academic issues that impact the entire class rather than personal issues.
- Assist with improving courses for future years.

The Feedback Cycle.



What Skills Will You Need?

Listening skills are pretty important. Listening is something we often take for granted. When you are a Rep, you may find that you need to communicate much more widely, with a diverse range of people.

The following is a checklist for listening well, if a student approaches you with an issue:

- Allow the student to talk without interruption.
- Maintain a friendly open manner. Try not to jump to conclusions or make judgment statements about what you are being told.
- If you are unclear about anything, ask for clarification.
- Summarise what the student has just told you and reflect back to them—‘*My understanding is that...is that correct?*’
- Ask the student what they would ideally like to see happen.
- Thank the student for taking the time to talk to you and assure the student that you will maintain confidentiality (unless otherwise agreed)
- Agree on any next steps that are your responsibility as a Course Rep OR refer them to other help as appropriate.
- Don't be judgemental.

You will need to be **OPEN** and **APPROACHABLE** but most importantly you will need to be **AVAILABLE** and **ENGAGE** with your fellow students and the University. Make sure you can be ‘found’ easily. It’s no good being a Course Rep if no-one in your class knows who you are!

If you identify an issue or something that can be improved on, you will need to be **PROACTIVE** in finding possible solutions and seeking information to support your case.

What Do I Get Out Of This?

- Build relationships within the faculty & work collaboratively with staff. The benefits to this are endless. From course advice to career advice... you will get the inside scoop!
 - You will receive a certificate to put in your CV. (We are working on getting your time as a Course Rep recorded on to your University Transcript, *watch this space*).
 - Experience is priceless when you are heading out into the workforce & you will gain this in spades!
 - Immersing yourself & getting involved — you can only improve your own Student Learning Experience.
 - Training & free food — We provide training at the beginning of each semester & will make sure you don't leave hungry!
 - Being a Course Rep provides fantastic 'on the ground' training in terms of communication, listening, being proactive & other valuable skills.
 - YOU get the Student Voice HEARD — job satisfaction at its best!
-

What Do I Do Next?

- Let your class know that you are their Course Rep!
- You can contact the class by using your course code.
- The email address is **[insert course code]@lincoln.ac.nz** (for example ERST201@lincoln.ac.nz). Make sure you copy in **coursereps@lusa.org.nz**
- Look on Akoraka | Learn — Course Reps for an email template you can use or create your own!

Expectations.

Course Reps are required to:

- Communicate, communicate, communicate...
 - Gather information from fellow students about all aspects of their course.
 - Share information gathered with LUSA, staff members & the University as required.
 - Attend all training & meetings held by LUSA.
 - Meet with the course lecturers & examiners at least 3 times during each semester.
 - Attend two Course Rep/Deans meetings, twice a semester.
-

Staff are required to:

There are a few things lecturers and examiners must do for students:

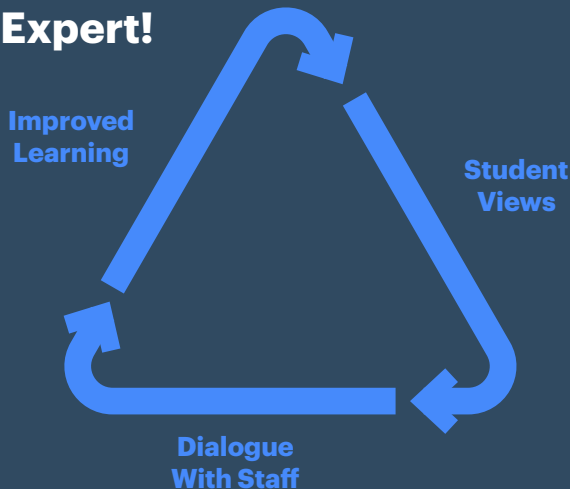
- Course outlines must be published 3 weeks before the start of semester.
- Tests must be returned within 3 weeks, & assignments within 4 weeks.
- Marked assessments must be accompanied by somewhat detailed written or oral feedback.
- Lincoln University has an open door policy. Lecturers & examiners will be available for students to meet with them.
- All reading & course handbook material will be made available on LEARN.
- You should expect lecturers to use effective teaching methods & be willing to take on student feedback.

When changes are made as a result of the Course Rep system, the lecturer will feed this back to the class and acknowledge that quality enhancements were made as a result of student input.

Students are required to:

- Abide by the course outlines.
- Make informed decisions based on the information provided by the University.
- Be familiar with the University's rules and regulations (found in the University Calendar).
- Bring problems or dissatisfactions to the lecturer's/examiners attention and seek to resolve conflicts informally, before going through the formal channels of the University.
- Participate actively in the learning environment, attend lectures, tutorials and labs, and submit assessments on time.
- Respect the rights of other students and show tolerance for alternative points of view.
- Monitor their own progress, and approach academic support programs and/ or staff for information, feedback and advice.
- Exercise their right and the responsibility to express their views through course evaluations, liaison committees, Course Reps, & to make individual representations to staff members.

You're The Expert!



Exercise Two.

Your course of study.

What course are you studying?

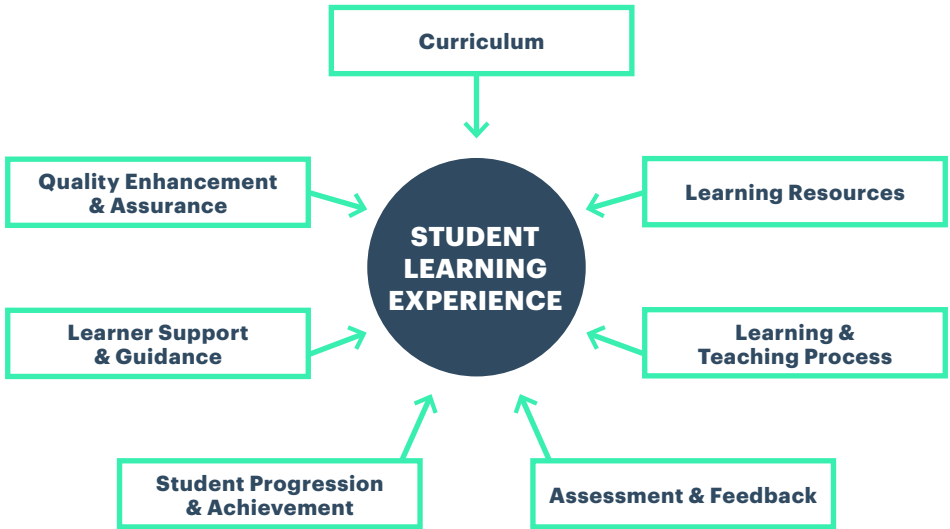
What do you like most about it?

What would you like to change or improve about it?

The Student Learning Experience.

The Student Learning Experience is a concept developed to help you understand the different parts that make up you and your fellow classmates' learning experience. It sets out a series of questions to guide your thinking.

What do we mean by learning experience? It is everything related to how you learn and the way you are taught.



There are **seven parts** to the Student Learning Experience at Lincoln University:

Curriculum.

- Do the learning outcomes correspond to what you are learning?
- Does the curriculum taught match your expectations from the information provided about the course, including the course outline?
- How is the course and its modules structured?
- Is your timetable clear and easy to understand?
- Do you find the course engaging and challenging?

Learning Resources.

- Are the lectures and other class learning materials easily accessible?
- If you are studying a practical course, do you have access to the resources/tools/materials you need?
- Do you have access to sufficient and up-to-date materials that you need (for example books, lab equipment and art materials)?
- Is the teaching material up-to-date?

Learning & Teaching Process.

- Are your classes stimulating/engaging and informative?
- Do you find the lectures a satisfactory method of imparting information?
- Do you find your tutorials promote your understanding of the subject and further learning?
- Do you think there is a good mix between lectures/tutorials/practicals/workshops?
- Are there any forms of learning you would like in addition to lectures and tutorials?
- Do you have enough close contact time with your lecturers/tutors?
- Do your classes motivate you to learn independently?
- Are you given support to develop your independent learning skills?
- Are class sizes appropriate?
- Are you able to learn in a way that suits you?
- Are there opportunities for peer-to-peer learning?

Assessments & Feedback.

- Do you feel you are given sufficient support to prepare well for your assessments?
 - Are you given enough time to prepare for assessments?
 - Is the assessment criteria clear to you?
 - Does the feedback you receive following assessments help you understand what you did well and what you need to do to improve?
 - Are there opportunities to discuss your progress with staff on a regular basis?
 - Are there too many exams or assessments?
 - Do assessments adequately and fairly represent the content of the course?
 - Is there a good balance between continuous assessment and end of course exams?
-

Student Progression & Achievement.

- Are you able to progress easily from one course to the next?
- Are you able to evaluate and report on your own personal progress through your course?
- Are further course opportunities and pathways made clear to you?

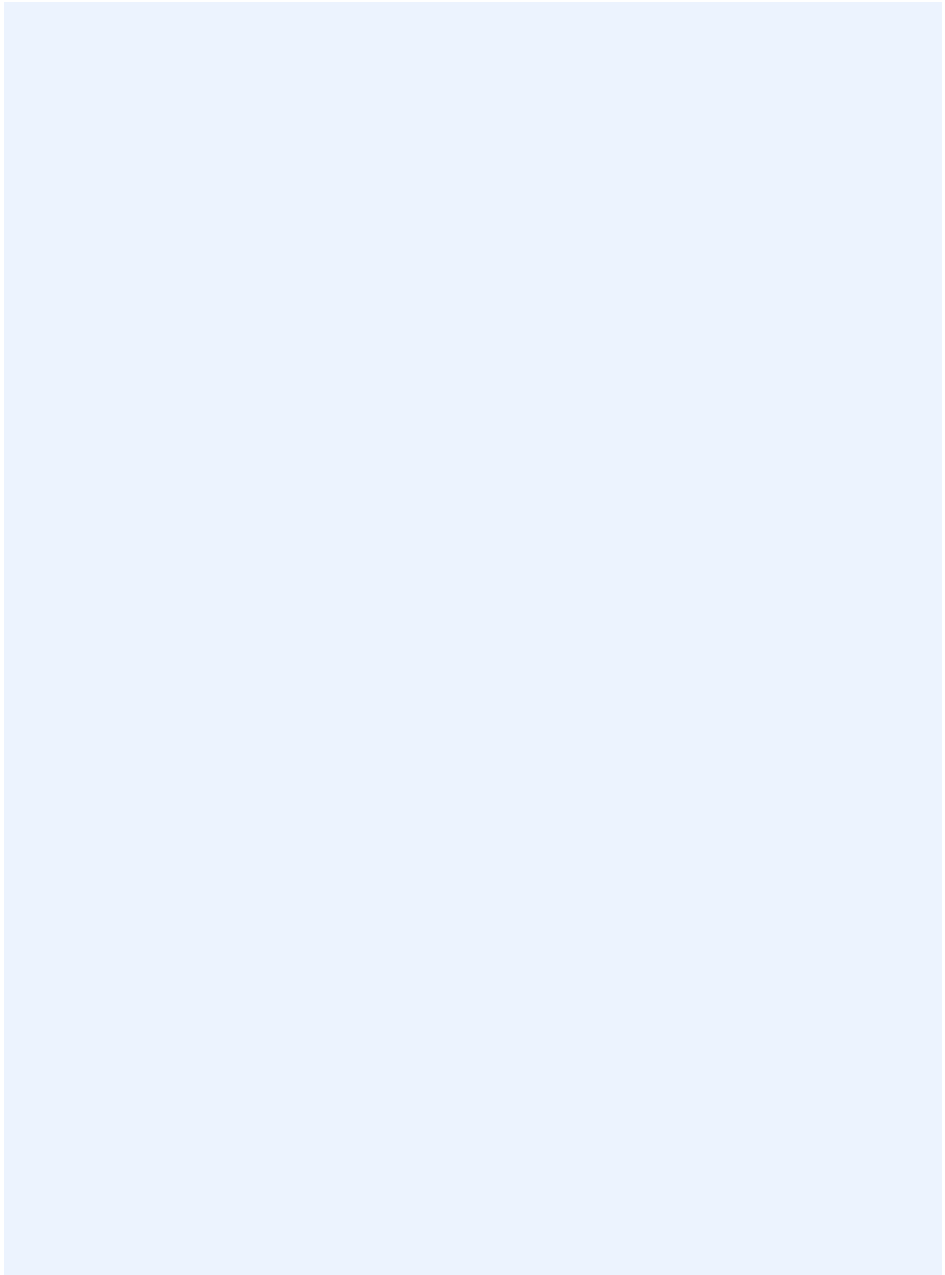
Learner Support & Guidance.

- How much support are you getting with your academic work?
 - Do you know where you can get help from if you are struggling with your work?
 - Are staff and students aware of the channels of dealing with issues?
 - Is your course advisor helpful?
 - Are you provided with sufficient course guidance and advice?
 - How informative and helpful is the careers centre?
 - Are you supported to undertake work experience/placements as part of your course?
-

Quality Enhancement & Assurance.

- Do you feel that the staff and department is receptive to student concerns and suggestions?
- Do you feel that you and your classmates' opinions are listened to and taken seriously?
- What improvements have been made to your course during your time of study?
- Do you consider that there is a strong student voice culture embedded in your course?

Notes on the Student Learning Experience:

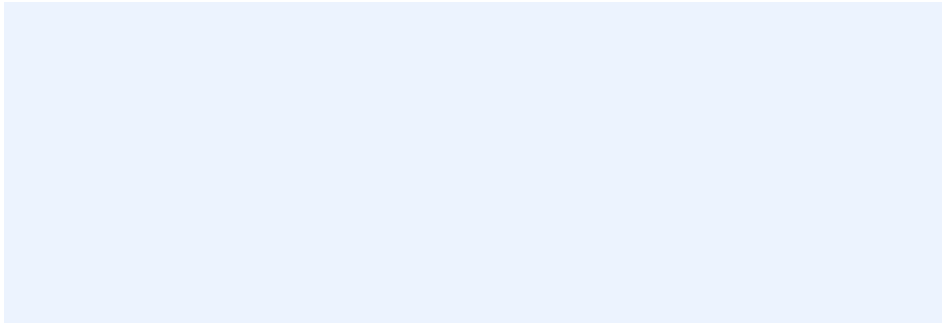


Exercise Three.

Gathering student opinion.

Look back to Exercise 2 and, in groups, pick one of the elements you like most about your course and one you would like to change.

Now think about how you would find out whether or not your fellow classmates agree:



Solutions for Dealing with Challenges:

During your time as a Course Rep, students might come to you with issues. The first thing to do is listen and understand what the problem is. It might be something you can mediate between the student and lecturer, such as a misunderstanding, or the student doesn't feel comfortable talking to the lecturer.

Other times, you might want to get more information or feedback on an issue, which is okay. However, don't solicit students for information, you are better off asking students generic, questions such as 'how they're finding the course', or using prompts from the Student

Learning Experience, to see if you can gather feedback that way.

- Use an informal approach, by talking to the lecturer.
- Approach the Student Communities Coordinator at LUSA, and talk to them about the issues and they can work with you on an action plan, which could include talking to the Head of Department or Dean.

If it's a not an issue you can help with, or it doesn't relate to the course always refer the person to the Student Communities Coordinator at LUSA.

Feedback.

Providing constructive feedback.

What happens next?

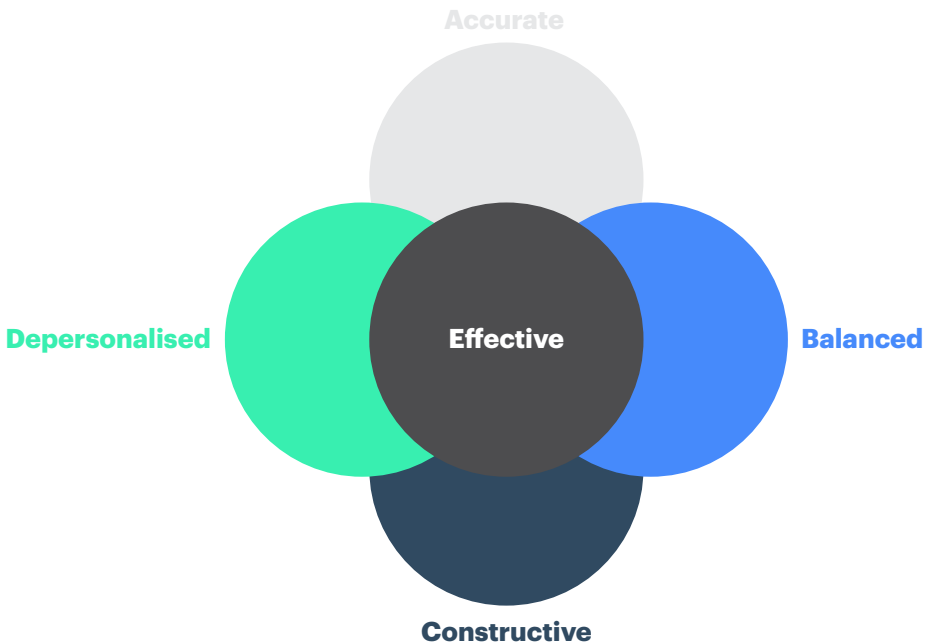
You will talk to your lecturer at least every 3 weeks or so, and provide feedback using the ABCD method below. Talk to your lecturer to schedule, in advance, the time and date of these meetings. We have included in this handbook a handy planner to assist you in scheduling these meeting and planning what to talk to your lecturer about.

ABCD Feedback:

Providing feedback is an essential part of being a Course Rep, but how do you provide it effectively?

The diagram below explains each element and how they contribute to providing effective feedback.

The ABCD Of Effective Feedback:



Accurate.

- When we comment on the learning experience we should be specific, and provide evidence for what we're saying. Avoid sweeping generalisations or emotional language.
 - This includes researching the point we wish to get over — sometimes we get a hunch that there's a problem and it turns out not to be the case, or it's less common – that doesn't make it less of a problem, but exaggerating it means it isn't taken seriously.
 - Where possible, include information about the scale of the issue or percentage of students affected, this adds weight to your argument. Doing so shows you've looked beyond your intuition and found out how it's affecting students.
-

Constructive.

- We're not just here to identify the problem, we're also here to help find a solution.
- If we raise an issue, we should make a suggestion at the same time or ask for help in putting one together.
- Your job is to help facilitate solutions, not just criticise. Being negative or inaccurate makes it easier for people to ignore what we're saying.

Depersonalised.

- Even if students think that a member of staff has done something wrong, Reps shouldn't make personal comments. Don't comment on a specific member of staff directly, talk instead about the impact on your learning experience.
 - Remember, that people are always working within larger systems - sometimes a person's professional failing is seen elsewhere and is a systemic problem.
 - Even if we're right to be annoyed at a particular person, the likelihood is that pointing it out bluntly, won't help to change things.
-

Balanced.

- We shouldn't only pass on negative comments to staff, even if that's mostly what we're hearing from students.
- We might see that staff have been trying hard but it hasn't helped, or isn't helping in the right ways. Make sure not to be one-sided. Sometimes LUSA might not be pulling its weight, sometimes our institution isn't listening, and sometimes we might be having an off-day and realise we've not done our best.
- Having a balanced perspective will help your work no-end and it's critical for working with everyone connected to learning.

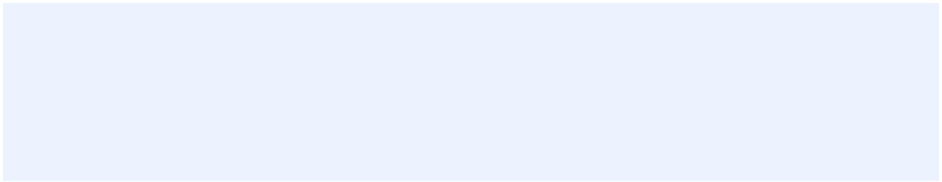
Exercise Four.

Effective feedback.

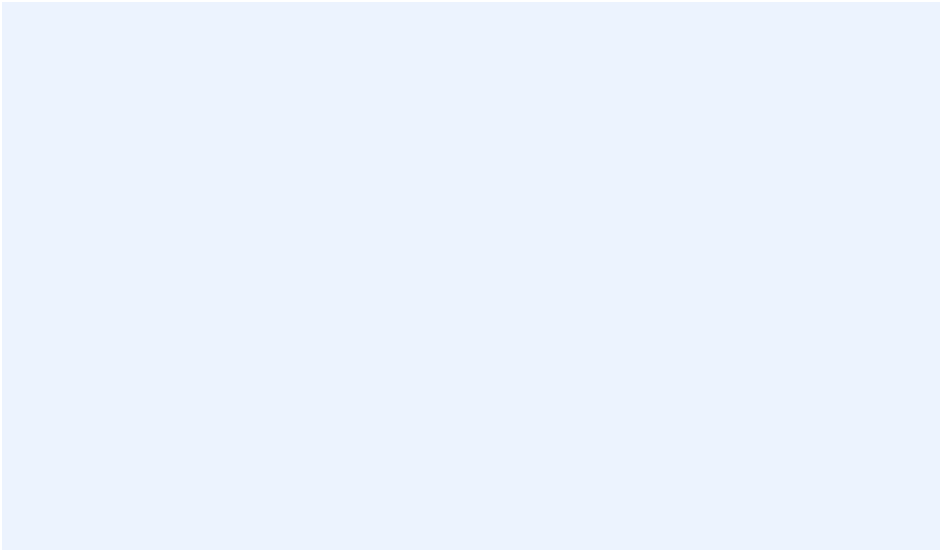
To be effective in the role of Course Rep, you will need to provide constructive feedback. Providing possible solutions at the same as reporting an issue will increase your chances of a successful outcome.

Look back to Exercise three and, in groups, plan out a way to feed this issue back using the ABCD method.

Issue:



Effective Feedback using the ABCD Method:



Negotiation.

Sometimes you will need to negotiate with your lecturers to get the best outcome for everyone. It's important to remember that sometimes this will not be exactly what you want.

- Ultimately, you want the best outcome for everyone, but if that's not possible, that's okay as long as the outcome is fair.
- The aims of negotiation are to achieve an outcome while preserving a working relationship.
- Go into any discussion with an open mind, be willing to hear the other person's perspective, and focus on the problem, not the person. It's much easier to solve a problem if the person with the issue comes prepared with some solutions that will reduce or resolve any problems.
- If things get too difficult you can always ask our Student Communities Coordinator for help.
- Always keep the Student Communities Coordinator up to date, and talk to them about any struggles or issues you are having. They are there to help you get the best outcomes for you and your classmates.

Schedule Meetings with Examiner/Lecturer.

We all get busy, so the best thing to do is schedule your meetings at the beginning of the Semester. This will ensure you manage three meetings per semester, and also gives you timelines to work towards when gathering class feedback etc.

Meeting 1

Week 4

Staff: _____

Date: _____ **Time:** _____

Location: _____

Things that are pretty awesome right now:

Challenges: Things that could do with some attention/could improve on.

Actions/Solutions for Challenges: For every challenge there should be a suggested solution.

Enhancement: How would you change this course to make it better?

Meeting 2

Week 8

Staff: _____

Date: _____ **Time:** _____

Location: _____

Things that are pretty awesome right now:

Challenges: Things that could do with some attention/could improve on.

Actions/Solutions for Challenges: For every challenge there should be a suggested solution.

Enhancement: How would you change this course to make it better?

Meeting 3

Week 11

Staff: _____

Date: _____ **Time:** _____

Location: _____

Things that are pretty awesome right now:

Challenges: Things that could do with some attention/could improve on.

Actions/Solutions for Challenges: For every challenge there should be a suggested solution.

Enhancement: How would you change this course to make it better?

Meeting with Faculty Deans.

Meetings with the Faculty Deans are held twice per semester, with all of the Course Reps in each faculty. This gives you the opportunity to talk about some of the feedback, and see if other Reps are having similar challenges. LUSA's Student Communities Coordinator will be there too to make sure things are recorded and feedback is followed up on.

My Dean/Course Rep Meetings are:

	Date	Time	Location
Meeting #1			
Meeting #2			

Useful Information.

Course Outlines:

Course outlines are compulsory for all courses. The course outline includes a programme of assessment events (test, assignments, projects, examinations, laboratories, field trips etc.) and it also includes policies relating to:

- [Extensions of time for submission of assignments](#)
- [Penalties for late submission of assignments](#)

Course outlines should be distributed or available to all students in the class at least three weeks prior to the beginning of the semester.

The assessment program outlined in the course outline should not be amended without the agreement of members of the class and the examiner. All agreed changes should be communicated in writing.

It is essential that you read and are familiar with the course outline. It is effectively a contract between yourself and the lecturer.

Assignments & Assessments:

The examiner should clearly communicate the following information in relation to assessments:

- Criteria upon which work will be marked
- Format recommended or required
- Submission deadline & penalty for late submissions

Assignments and other internal assessments worth 10% or more are expected to be back to students within four weeks of them being submitted for marking.

Examiners/lecturers must provide feedback to the class on assessments either verbally or in writing.

All internal assessment marks and scripts are to be made available to students not less than five working days before the final examination in the subject.

Overdue test/assignment results - University policy is that pieces of academic work worth over 10% need to be returned to the student before the next piece of assessment is due and within four weeks of the date that the original piece of assessment was presented. Students need to check the course outline in the first instance and check the date in which the assignment was handed in or when the relevant test was sat. They then need to approach the lecturer and inquire as to when they might expect their grades or assessments back. The lecturer may provide a reasonable explanation as to why assessments have not been returned and set a new date for their return. If there are on-going issues then the students could consider contacting the LUSA Student Communities Coordinator or the Head of Department (HOD).



Student Communities Coordinator
course reps@lusa.org.nz
03 423 0033
www.lusa.org.nz

