

# Student Representative Handbook



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# Welcome

## Congratulations on becoming a UQ student representative!

**Over your term you have an important role to play in providing the student voice to UQ committees, boards and advisory groups.**

Your enthusiasm, ideas and expertise will be invaluable to improving the UQ student experience. Being a student representative is an exciting opportunity that will enable you to expand your professional networks, develop personal and professional skills and make a difference in your community. We encourage you to make the most of this opportunity. Be prepared, be brave and be bold - this is your chance to have your voice heard!

This handbook will help you to prepare for your role. You will find out what it means to be a student representative, learn helpful tips and tricks to help you on your way, and gather information to help you navigate the complex structures and processes of the University.

This is an exciting opportunity to have a profound impact on UQ student life - best of luck!

# What is student representation?

Student representation is a means of amplifying the student voice through the active engagement of students on committees, boards and advisory groups\*. This in turn affords student representatives the opportunity to shape and enhance the university student experience by working with staff members in a positive and mutually respectful way.

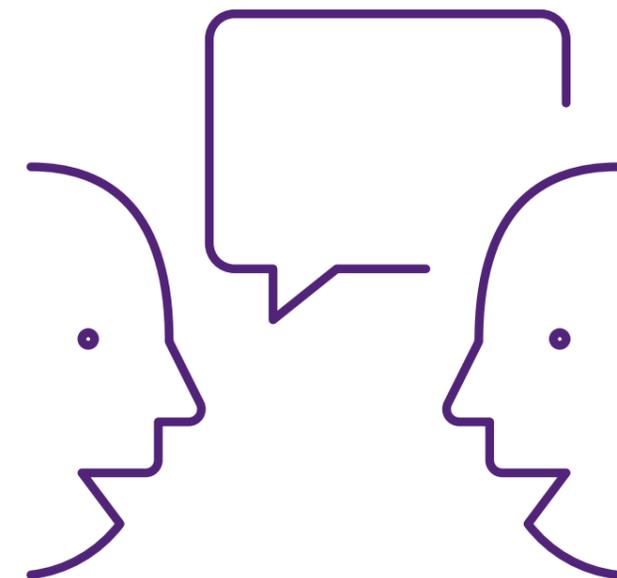
For more information about student representation at UQ, visit the [Student-Staff Partnerships](#) and [Academic Advocacy Network](#) websites.

\*This handbook mainly refers to 'committees' for ease of reference, but this term is used to refer to any working party or advisory group in which students are invited to be members.



## Now that you are a student representative you can:

- 1** Make a difference! You have the opportunity to have your voice heard and enact real change at UQ
- 2** Improve the student experience for your peers and for future students
- 3** Develop your professional skills e.g. learn to critically analyse meeting documents, to scan for relevant discussion points, and to use persuasive language
- 4** Develop your personal skills e.g. feel more confident speaking up and gathering feedback from peers and staff members
- 5** Make connections and build relationships with staff, students and generally important and influential people



# Being a student representative and your employability

We'll make an assumption that one of the main reasons you're at UQ is to ultimately become gainfully employed. Being a student representative can definitely assist in developing your 'employability'. What does employability even mean, you might ask. Well, in short, it's developing your personal and professional skills in order to make you stand out from the crowd in order to get the job you want. Here's some of the skills being a student representative can develop:

- Synthesising information to make recommendations
- Developing good decision-making skills and exercising good judgment
- Increased confidence in speaking in front of audiences, especially in voicing your opinions
- Crafting clear and compelling arguments
- Communicating with influence and using persuasive language
- Understanding complex organisational structures
- Working with stakeholders with competing priorities / agendas
- Reading the room - i.e. recognising who the key decision makers are, and how best to approach a topic, so that these people can work with you

## Fun Fact

Being a representative counts towards the [UQ Employability Award](#). If you'd like more information on the Employability Award, please contact the Student Employability Centre: [employability@uq.edu.au](mailto:employability@uq.edu.au).



## STUDENT PROFILE

### Cheah Zhong Xiang

UQ is a huge entity with very diverse needs and wants, therefore students and staff communicating and collaborating as partners to develop strategies and policies is necessary to ensure that these are met to the best possible outcome. Some people may mistakenly think that student representation is all about fighting for student rights, and it's a students versus staff showdown. Nothing could be further from the fact! Remember that it's students AND staff against daily challenges.

I've sat on the UQ SAFS Space Usage and Allocation Committee (2017), UQ SAFS Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (2018), and will be on the UQ Academic Board (2019). These opportunities have allowed me to gain insights on how considerations are discussed and decisions are made in a corporate world (talk about a free-and-easy internship on your doorstep, and CV-includable too!). They even open doors for networking with other staff I seldom meet, and there are chances for other experiences such as sitting on recruitment, selection and interview panels for potential future lecturers.

Ever felt that some things are just not right or could be done better, and should be changed or improved? Don't sit around and sulk or complain to your friends - this is a chance for you to get up and do something. Be the voice of your unheard, or sometimes neglected and marginalised (unintentionally) peers!

# Roles and responsibilities of a student representative

A student representative is elected or nominated to represent a broader student cohort, to act on their behalf and to ensure the student voice is heard clearly across UQ. As a student representative, you will be expected to:

## Engage with your peers

Whether it be within a specific program, school, faculty or the broader student body, in order to effectively represent your peers, you need to know what they're thinking and having issues with

## Build positive working relationships with University staff

Both students and staff want to improve the experience of everyone at UQ, so work collaboratively and respectfully, even when you disagree. Together you can achieve great things!

## Actively participate meetings

This means coming prepared to contribute to discussions by doing the required readings and seeking out student feedback on issues that may affect your peers. It is worth taking note of student issues as they arise and brainstorming solutions with other student representatives prior to the meeting. Committees and working groups respond best to ideas that can be actioned

## Close the feedback loop

Relay meeting outcomes to your peers to ensure that there is a greater understanding of the decision-making processes that impact everyone at UQ. This also includes passing on everything you've learned to incoming student representatives... but more on this later!

# Diversity of voice

A strength of student representation is in having a diversity of voice. There are approximately 50,000 students here at UQ - each with their own story. Different backgrounds, programs of study, work arrangements etc. all impact the life of a student, and encapsulating these differences into the decision-making process ensures better outcomes for all students. By hearing from diverse voices we strengthen our decision-making procedures and foster inclusion. If you feel this diversity of voice is not present (either in your own committee or more broadly), it's up to you to speak up. Here are some things that you can do:

## Be the change

Speak up on your committee if you feel there is a cohort of students that are not being adequately represented. Ask the chair to increase the number of student representatives and to be more inclusive of this cohort.

## Reach out to particular student cohorts through the UQ Union.

There are UQ Union collectives that represent and support a wide variety of different student groups, including postgraduate, international, indigenous and LGBTIQ+ students. To get in contact or find out more, follow this link: <http://www.uqu.com.au/uqucollectives>

You can also access an amazing cross-section of students through UQU Clubs and Societies: <http://www.uqu.com.au/clubs-societies>

By hearing from diverse voices we strengthen our decision making procedures and foster inclusion. If you feel this diversity of voice is not occurring (either in your own committee or more broadly), it's up to you to speak up.



## STUDENT PROFILE

### Alicia Kirk

I was a representative on the School of Chemistry and Molecular Biosciences's (SCMB) Coursework Student Advisory Group (CSAG) for three years as an undergraduate student. In that time, I saw the successful return of the SCMB mixer, changes in laboratory manuals, suggestions to course structuring, extra library sessions and workshops for skills identified as needed, and final grade breakdowns for courses being released to students at the end of semester. We, the group of student representatives, brought about all of these changes.

We are moving into a new era of horizontal networks within our communities, and if we are to transform the systems in our university to equally meet the needs of students, staff, and institution, we will need to work together in partnership. In this sense, engaging students and hearing their voice is vital to the UQ community.

Aside from the bigger picture, being a student representative has shown me how to run meetings, engage with peers, identify issues, and work collaboratively to brainstorm solutions. It has given me the opportunity to help organise events, produce posters and flyers, and find confidence in my voice.

To any student with the opportunity to be a student representative, I encourage you to be involved. Not only will you better understand how the University operates and improve the university experience for both current and future students, but you will see personal and professional growth within yourself.

"If we are to transform the systems in our university to equally meet the needs of students, staff, and institution, we will need to work together in partnership." - Alicia Kirk, Student Representative



# The impact of student representation

## The benefits of student representation to the student body

An effective student representative gives all students a meaningful voice. This ensures that the concerns and ideas of the broader student body are being raised and addressed in appropriate forums. The collective power of students being represented by a strong voice exerts much more influence than individual students making individual complaints. This power can be used to further improve the student experience for all.

Student representation and the student voice is important to the University because it provides clear routes by which students are able to increase their engagement with the learning environment and to provide input into decision making. Such processes also enable students to take part in the academic community as partners and as potential agents involved in creating change.

Students are a major stakeholder in a university and therefore incorporating the student voice into the decision-making processes ensures more robust and valid decisions. Committees that centre on student-focused outcomes (i.e. student experience, teaching and learning, research) value having a student voice because it provides an in-situ sense check that may save them time and effort re-evaluating decisions down the line.

Student representatives also play a crucial part in building a sense of community in a cohort of students. When a student cohort has an effective process to raise their concerns, they feel valued and listened to as part of the UQ community. When students have a sense of agency within an institution, the learning experiences are enhanced. This in turn may have positive impacts on student retention.

Student representatives develop personal and professional skills which will make them employable, high-calibre candidates in the workplace, which in turn reflects positively on UQ's reputation for producing game-changing graduates.



### STAFF PROFILE

#### Professor Polly Parker Faculty of Business, Education & Law

Hearing the student voice is an important way to show our respect for students as designers of their own learning journeys. Staff-student interactions build strong relationships through mutual engagement that provides a strong foundation for effective academic partnerships between critical stakeholders.

Student voice in committees provides a crucial perspective to be heard and considered. It is too easy to assume that we know best without really understanding students' views. Creating change requires listening to all perspectives, honouring differences and engaging together in decision making processes.

Students make a good impression when they come prepared to discuss items on the agenda – or add items to the agenda that need to be there – and represent their viewpoint. Demonstrating reciprocal respect for all members of the academic community builds a stronger context in which we all work and enjoy. Students and staff add value and model leadership practices through such processes.

“Staff-student interactions build strong relationships through mutual engagement that provides a strong foundation for effective academic partnerships between critical stakeholders.” *Professor Polly Parker*



### STAFF PROFILE

#### Associate Professor Peter Cabot Faculty of Health & Behavioural Sciences

Student representation is important to both student learning and the university future. When students engage in their learning as well as the environment in which they learn, opportunities emerge that help shape an optimal experience.

The role for a student voice is essential to developing learning design and approach, and engaging students actively in committee representation brings that perspective in a fresh and vibrant manner that can only help shape learning strategies.

Student reps should engage openly in committee discussions. Students shouldn't feel the need to always represent a body of opinion - a point of view can be even more influential and valuable when drawn from your own experience or reflection.

“When students engage in their learning as well as the environment in which they learn, opportunities emerge that help shape an optimal experience.” *Associate Professor Peter Cabot*



## STUDENT PROFILE

### Kaiyin Wu, Vice President (Student Rights), UQ Union

The UQ Union is the elected body that represents all students at UQ. We strongly support student representation and believe that the importance of independent voices cannot be understated. As student representatives, you form the link between the student body and university decision makers. You have the rare opportunity to shape the delivery of education at UQ for the better. The role of student representatives in raising the student voice is indispensable in achieving good outcomes for students. Ultimately, all decisions made at UQ impact students and so, truly positive change can only occur when the university listens to the student voice.

The UQ Union has a significant role in representation. We sit on many of the top level committees at UQ and we coordinate the Academic Advocacy Network - a network of student representatives on committees at the School and Faculty level that helps us more effectively advocate for students.

You can find more information about the Academic Advocacy Network on page 13.

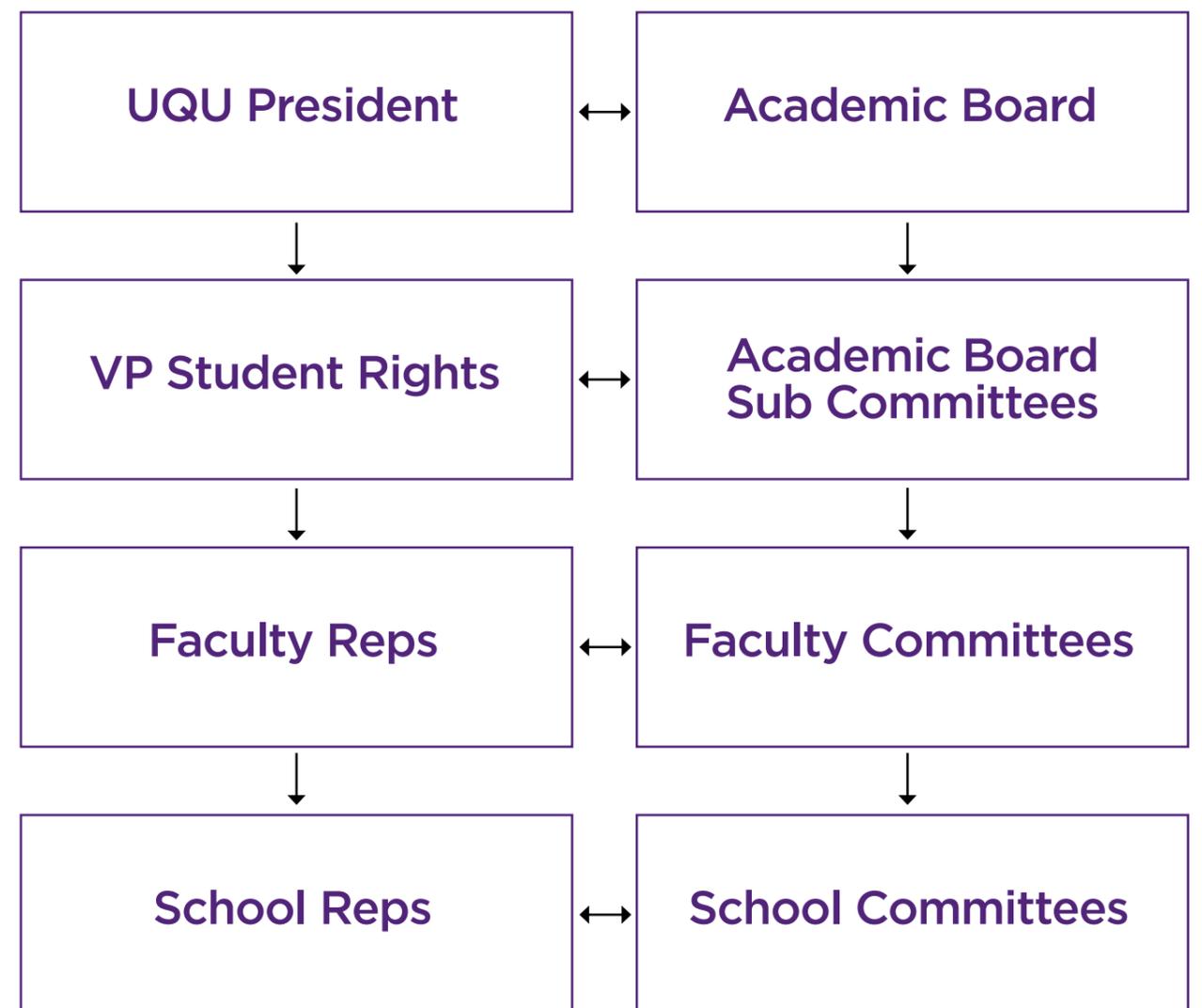
“As student representatives, you form the link between the student body and university decision makers. You have the rare opportunity to shape the delivery of education at UQ for the better.”

*Kaiyin Wu, Vice President (Student Rights) UQ Union*

# Academic Advocacy Network (AAN)

The Academic Advocacy Network (AAN) is a student-led system of representation coordinated by the UQ Union. The [UQ Union](#) is the elected body responsible for representing all students at UQ. One of our biggest priorities is student representation, and we want to ensure students are getting the best possible education.

The goal of the Academic Advocacy Network is to support and assist student representatives to speak up for the student body. AAN consists of student representatives on committees at a school and faculty level who liaise with UQ Union representatives on Academic Board and its sub-committees (ie Teaching & Learning Committee, Committee for Academic Programs Policy, Assessment sub-committee). By creating a unified and coordinated system of representation at all levels of UQ, positive change can be more effectively pursued.



To reach out to a representative in AAN, please refer to our [website](#).

For more information or to get involved with the Academic Advocacy Network, contact UQU Vice President (Student Rights) Kaiyin Wu at [kaiyin.wu@uqu.com.au](mailto:kaiyin.wu@uqu.com.au)



# How committee meetings work

## Before your first meeting

The next section will give you an idea of what to expect in your first meeting. As you may already know, UQ has quite a complex governance structure and every committee is different. The best advice is to talk to someone in your committee before the first meeting (ideally the committee chair, secretary or whoever recruited you). Questions to ask may include:

- What is the scope of the committee? What type of information/issues does it deal with?
- Where does the information come from, and where does it go?
- How does the committee run? Does it follow a strict agenda or is it more discussion-based?

- Who else is on the committee? What are their roles?
- Are there any terms or acronyms you don't understand?
- How many meetings are there per year? How long do meetings typically go for?
- If you're unable to attend a meeting, who do you tell and can you appoint someone to go in your place?
- General conduct: What is appropriate dress? Are you required to address other members by their formal titles? What is the process for raising student issues (e.g. adding an agenda item)?

Remember, your role is to effectively represent your cohort, and that's much easier to do when you understand

the process and context of your committee. A good first step is to identify someone as your 'Committee Ally' - a staff member that you feel comfortable talking to and asking advice from. This may be the committee chair but could also be a different staff member that you feel really values student input and the student voice.

It is also important to note that UQ staff on many of these committees are experts in their field, have been students in

your situation and are on committees to support student learning. You can therefore learn from their experiences.

Keeping the above in mind, the following pages are filled with a few tips and tricks to help you get started.

## Meeting etiquette

Walking in to your first committee meeting can be intimidating. To make a good first impression and set yourself up to be an effective student rep, follow this list of tips and tricks:

- **Read the agenda and highlight items that may affect students** (e.g. a course restructure, cost of parking, food and drink offering). When reading the papers, ensure that you pay more attention to the items that you've highlighted, make notes on them and gather feedback as necessary
- **Do your research.** If it looks like this issue has been raised previously, have a look through old minutes and check out what is published on it
- **Gather feedback from peers** (more information in "Engaging with your peers")

- **Identify a Committee Ally** (possibly the chair or secretary) that you think is supportive of the student voice. Ask to meet with them and ask any questions you feel uncomfortable raising at a meeting
- **Make notes on what you want to say.** Write a speech if it makes you feel more comfortable
- **Consider the cultural tone of the committee** (ask your Committee Ally or committee chair for advice). Consider how formal the committee is (how do you address people - by first names or with titles) and what language is appropriate to use
- **Speak confidently and voice your opinion** (that's what you're there for!) but be respectful - not everyone will agree with you, and that's okay.

## Do's and Don'ts

### Do

- Do read the committee papers and be prepared to engage in discussion
- Do dress appropriately (doesn't have to be business attire, but not footy shorts and thongs)
- Do be respectful - you can disagree with someone's opinion but don't make it personal
- Do let the secretary know if you can't attend (ask whether you can send someone in your place i.e. a proxy).



### Don't

- Don't arrive late and disorganised
- Don't look disinterested or disengaged (don't slouch, doodle, put your head on the table)
- Don't spend the meeting looking at your phone - seriously, don't do it. Put your phone on silent and leave it in your bag.
- Don't interrupt or speak over people - listen to what other committee members are saying. It's all about robust and meaningful discussion.



As a student representative you are a conduit for student ideas, complaints and concerns. Students may come to you directly or you may take note of issues raised in casual conversations. Students might be having issues with a course, content, a lecturer, personal issues or navigating the administrative requirements of university life. How you explore or deal with these issues can make a difference to everyone's experience, so here are some useful ways to either address or escalate the issue.

- Ask your peer if they are familiar with different ways to address their concern – is there a professional service available that might be able to help (e.g. Student Services or Student Help on Campus)? Or is this an issue that needs to be escalated?
- Ask your peer if other students are having similar issues and if they feel confident to address it together, and if they would like the issues to be voiced at a higher level
- General issues can be supported by checking in with students and either informing them through experience and conversation or helping them find the right person to talk to. In some cases it is valuable to have a student rep accompany students to the right administrator who can support their issue.

Many issues are commonly encountered at various times by other students but it might be the first time for whomever has voiced their concern. Whilst many of these concerns are general and not necessarily relevant to your committee, board or other governance body, taking time to check in with peers means you are able to discuss representative issues of the cohort when the University is looking for guidance on how to improve the student experience.

A student may raise an issue that you are uncomfortable with or unable to answer. In these cases, there is help available and other people to refer the student on to. Please refer to the contact list at the back of this handbook. If you are worried about the immediate safety or wellbeing of a student, contact UQ Security on 3365 1234 or dial 000.

**Agenda** - The agenda is the plan the meeting will follow and it lists what items will be discussed

**Apologies** - Apologies are given by members that are unable to attend the meeting

**Course** - A course is a distinct unit of study within a program for which a result is given, similar to a subject at school. Full-time students usually study 3 to 4 courses (6-8 units) per semester. Each course is identified by its alphanumeric code, a title and a fixed unit value

**Minutes** - Committee meeting minutes are an accurate and official record of what was discussed and decided within the meeting

**Order of Business** - This is a matter to be dealt with (i.e the first order of business is the first item on the agenda)

**PPL (Policies and Procedures library)** - Policies define UQ's position and objective/s on matters of strategic significance and the relevant outputs and outcomes that UQ needs to deliver to give effect to its policy position and objectives. All policy requirements are principles-based, consistent with legal or regulatory obligations, and their adoption and effectiveness is evidenced and verifiable.

- Policies have University-wide application
- Policies can be Governance, Academic or Operational in nature
- Procedures describe the processes and activities that help to reach the outcomes defined in their parent policies. Procedures are categorised based on the categorisation of the parent policy. Requirements identified in both policies and procedures are mandatory
- Academic procedures are approved by the relevant custodian after considering any advice from the Academic Board or its committee/s
- Operational procedures are approved by the relevant custodian
- New or revised procedures are referred to relevant stakeholders for consultation prior to being approved and issued.

**Program** - A program is a sequence of study that includes enrolment, study and graduation where you are normally awarded with a degree, certificate or diploma

**Standing Orders** - These are the "rules" that govern the conduct of the meeting. They include the order in which the agenda is considered, how many meetings need to be called in a year, notice requirements etc.

**Starring** - In a number of committees, the agenda will include a number of items, too many to reasonably be discussed in a meeting. Starring an agenda item ensures that this item will be verbally considered in the meeting

**Terms of Reference** - A committee's Terms of Reference sets out its powers, duties and functions. The composition (number, position and method of appointment of members) of the committee will also often be included in the Terms of Reference



**People:**

- VC** - Vice Chancellor
- COO** - Chief Operating Officer
- DVC(A, R, EE)** - Deputy-Vice Chancellor (Academic, Research and External Engagement)
- VCC** - Vice Chancellor Committee (comprised of the above people + the Provost)
- PVC** (T&L, A, FS, IE, RI, RP, RT, R) - Pro Vice Chancellor (Teaching & Learning, Advancement, Future Students, Indigenous Engagement, Research Infrastructure, Research Planning, Research Training, Research)
- ED** - Executive Dean
- AD(A, R, EE)** - Associate Dean (Academic, Research and External Engagement)
- HoS** - Head of School
- Prof** - Professor
- A/Prof** - Associate Professor
- SAAM** - Senior Academic Admin Manager

**Places:**

- AEB** - Advanced Engineering Building
- AIBN** - Australian Institute of Bioengineering and Nanotechnology
- BWC** - Brian Wilson Chancellery (also referred to as the Chancellery)
- GCI** - Global Change Institute
- ICTE** - Institute of Continuing and TESOL Education (TESOL - Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages)
- IMB** - Institute for Molecular Bioscience
- ISSR** - Institute for Social Science Research
- ITaLI** - Institute of Teaching and Learning
- MFC** - Multi-Faith Chaplaincy
- MRI** - Mater Research Institute
- QBI** - Queensland Brain Institute
- SMI** - Sustainable Minerals Institute
- SHOC** - Student Help On Campus (advocacy service that is part of the UQ Union)
- UQU** - UQ Union (your student union)

**Not exactly places:**

- ASD** - Academic Services Division
- ATSIS** - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Unit
- BEL** - Faculty of Business, Economics and Law
- EAIT** - Faculty of Engineering, Architecture and Information Technology
- HaSS** - Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

- HaBS** - Faculty of Health and Behavioural Sciences
- SHOC** - Student Help On Campus (advocacy service that is part of the UQ Union)
- UQU** - UQ Union (your student union)
- ITS** - Information Technology Services
- OMC** - Office of Marketing and Communications
- P&F** - Properties and Facilities

**Things:**

- AB** - Academic Board
- BOS** - Board of Studies
- CAPP** - Committee of Academic Programs Policy
- CRM** - Customer Relationship Management
- DB** - Disciplinary Board
- E&I** - Entrepreneurship and Innovation (encompasses iLab, IdeaHub and UQ Entrepreneurship and Innovation Society, amongst others)
- HDR** - Higher Degree Research
- HEA** - Higher Education Academy
- IIU** - Integrity and Investigations Unit
- JSAPP** - Jump Start Academic Progression Program
- KPI** - Key Performance Indicator
- MarComm** - Marketing and Communications
- QILT** - Quality Indicators of Teaching and Learning
- Refec** - The Main Course refectory located in the UQ Union Complex
- SDAC** - Senate Disciplinary Appeals Committee
- SEC** - Student Experience Committee or Student Employability Centre
- SECaT** - Student Evaluation of Course and Teacher
- SMS** - Student Management System (also Sexual Misconduct Support Unit)
- SoTL** - Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
- SSAC** - Senate Student Appeals Committee
- SSAF** - Student Services and Amenities Fee
- SSP** - Student Staff Partnerships
- T&L** - Teaching and Learning
- UQ2U** - a program delivering blended learning (online content with high-value on campus active learning)
- UQNAV** - a phone app that contains searchable maps of UQ's campuses
- W&I** - Welcome and Induction
- WIL** - Work Integrated Learning



## Engaging with your peers

Now you know what to expect when you walk into the committee room, the next step is ensuring that when you get there you're prepared to represent the student voice. As a student, you have your own background, experiences and expertise that make you an invaluable contributor. However, the strength of the student voice comes from the representative views of a cohort. So how do you know what your cohort is thinking/feeling/wanting? The simple answer is – you ask. The next section will step you through strategies to gather student feedback and collate student input on agenda items.

As a student representative, part of your role is being accessible and known to your cohort. This may mean having a student rep email, or being available for consult hours throughout the year. Either way, this is something that appropriate staff members will be able to assist you with. **You should ask the committee chair what resources are available and who you can contact to access these.**



## Collecting student feedback

**The first thing to note is that the outgoing student representative will be able to offer the best advice on what method of engagement will work best for your cohort. As a first step, touch base and see what worked for them!**

It is the responsibility of a student representative to represent the broader views of their cohort. And the only way you'll be able to achieve this is if you actively engage with your cohort. Similarly, it's your responsibility to ensure that your cohort know who you are and how to get in touch with you! The earlier you make yourself known, the better. This ensures that there is time for issues to be raised well ahead of committee meetings and allows for more time to develop the relationship between yourself and your peers.

There are two broad modes of engagement that can be used by a student representative. The following section explores each of them and several ways to make them work for you.

### Direct engagement

Direct engagement is the more effective way of engaging with your peers. Having direct engagement with students can provide students with a sense of belonging and trust as they may feel personally valued and listened to. It can also benefit the student representative by ensuring vital information is not lost in the process. Where possible, the direct mode of engagement is preferred.

#### Sit down and have a chat

Sometimes simple is best. Chat to your classmates, your friends, make an effort to sit next to someone before a lecture or approach your peers at lunch time. Bring up topics that are coming up in your next committee meeting and ask them what they think or if they have anything they'd like you to raise. Chatting will always be informal, though, and while it will not provide you with robust evidence on which to base decisions, it could be a starting point to direct you to more rigorous forms of engagement.

#### Via a focus group

Setting up focus groups can help student representatives in several ways, such as:

- To discuss a major change and get student opinion on it
- To have a group discussion before a meeting to decide on an action plan
- To raise and discuss issues relevant to the cohort
- To have timely check-ins with students on current methods of representation and get feedback or suggestions
- To identify an action plan (preferably at the beginning of year)

Focus groups can be set up in open spaces or within the faculty building. The student representative can get in touch with their faculty administrators to arrange spaces.

**Some other things to keep in mind while setting up focus groups:**

- Students need to be informed in advance (preferably a week or two) to ensure adequate attendance
- Identifying the segment of students to invite to a focus group is a job of the student representative and several factors should be considered including issues, impact and relevance. Some issues might only affect a certain segment of students from a faculty, for example, in which case sending mail to all students would be unnecessary
- Getting students to RSVP could benefit the representative especially if they plan on booking a space for the session.

*Further information on how to run an effective focus group can be found in a separate handbook on the [Student-Staff Partnerships website](#).*

#### Via email

Setting up focus groups could be difficult or not required at times, in which case student representatives can use email as a mode of communication. Staff members could set up an email address for student representatives (e.g. [hassreps@uq.edu.au](mailto:hassreps@uq.edu.au)) and provide the representatives with access to that email address for the duration of their term. If that option is not available, ask a staff member if they can send an email on the student representative's behalf, or what other methods may be appropriate.

Student representatives can use this mode of communication to inform students about focus groups, student meetings or social gatherings. Providing students with an email address ensures that students can reach their representative with any issues they have at any given point in time, which can then be discussed in a focus group if required. This also ensures that students have a mode to communicate with the representative and for that purpose it is highly advised that student representatives ensure they enable this mode of communication within their cohort.

#### Via social media

Utilising social media can be a very effective tool to gather feedback from peers. Setting up a Facebook group or a BlackBoard forum can all prove to be easy and efficient ways of reaching out to and eliciting feedback from your peers.

#### Informal feedback sessions

Student-led events can be as simple as a morning tea or picnic up to a student led symposium. These events can be invaluable in creating a community and curating a space where students feel safe to share their thoughts. The UQ Union, the Student-Staff Partnerships' team, faculties or schools may even provide budgets for such events. If you're interested in pursuing this strategy further, reach out to the Student- Staff Partnerships' team for support and advice on how to get started: [SSP@uq.edu.au](mailto:SSP@uq.edu.au)

## Indirect engagement

Indirect engagement utilises representative bodies or groups in lieu of talking to individual students. This may prove to be a more efficient way of eliciting student feedback as it doesn't necessarily rely on one-on-one interactions.

### Clubs and societies

The UQ Union can give you access to a plethora of clubs and societies of all kinds. Some faculties, schools and programs of study also have relevant clubs and societies that represent students. Getting in touch with clubs and societies is a great way to get a diverse opinion and use the structures of student engagement they already have in place. As a student representative, it is your responsibility to communicate with students, and this could be one of the most convenient ways in which to do that. Issues and action plans could be discussed with the society executives and they can then gather student feedback using their modes of communication. As a representative, you may benefit from collaborating with relevant clubs in terms of support and knowledge.

### Volunteers

You may also consider forming your own team of interested student volunteers to support you in your duties. Getting a team of volunteers to help with communication strategy or other activities (like events) can enhance your experience and increase the scale of your reach. It also means that you are encouraging multiple connection points for students with different needs and timetables.

### Faculty or school staff

Student representatives may want to ask faculty and school staff for assistance in engaging with the student cohort. One method of support that staff can provide is sending out emails to an entire cohort. Since faculty heads usually have email addresses of all students, it is easier for them to pass on mail to the students. However, it is the responsibility of a student representative to introduce themselves to the faculty and school staff and ask for their help. This could be used as a possible alternative to communicate with students if the representative does not have access to the student mailing list.

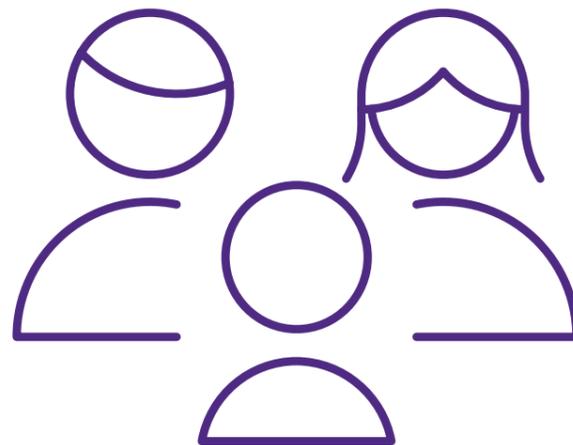
### Via survey

An option you might want to explore is to collect student opinions via online surveys. Staff may be able to assist you in granting access to online tools and programs such as SurveyMonkey, as well as distributing the survey over email or advertising it as a BlackBoard announcement. Another method of electronic survey may be to use short online polls on social media sites or Blackboard. Contact the Student-Staff Partnerships team for more advice on this.

## Building relationships with staff and students

Our ways of building and nurturing relationships depends on our personal style. For some of us, we work well at creating spaces where students can gather informally in a collegiate setting. Perhaps we establish good relationships in our lectures or classrooms. Perhaps we go out of our way to contact people one-on-one through email or social media. Either way, establishing rapport and getting to know both the cohort and the staff who administer your program means that when we come across an issue we can connect with people and come up with some creative solutions very early on.

This also applies when we want to innovate or host events within our program. Being on good terms with administrative staff who fill out various forms and approvals (or even book our rooms) is so valuable when running program-based events. This includes acting professionally and reliably (as above) but also being friendly and finding win-win solutions for everyone. Seeking advice from trusted staff members before raising contentious issues within a community setting also allows constructive conversations which ultimately provide the University and the students with a much more supportive workplace.



# Handing over everything you have learnt

During your term as a student representative, you will learn and discover a lot of valuable information about how the University works and specifically, how your committee runs. This 'corporate knowledge' will include good, bad and ugly stories of how organisational operations work. Bureaucracies can be slow, which means that at the conclusion of your term you might not have had the chance to see the outcomes or benefits of your contributions as a rep. An effective way of addressing this is by having each rep write a comprehensive 'handover' document for the reps they can follow, and to co-ordinate a handover period where both new and old reps can work through plans and learning points together. A thorough handover is essential to welcoming new reps to their role and can be achieved by:



**Inviting the new rep to sit in on a final committee/board meeting so that they can see you in action and learn from observation**



**Being positive - tell them about the opportunities there are to build on the work you've already started**



**Passing on enough information to enable your successor(s) to hit the ground running**



**Giving examples of activities or methods of communication that worked**



**Identifying problems you encountered and how you overcame them**



**Highlighting scope for future work for student reps and suggesting things to focus on for their coming term**

# UQ Governance: How does it work?

**The governing body of UQ is the Senate. The Senate is responsible for the strategic planning, financial health and external affairs of UQ. One undergraduate student and one postgraduate student is elected to the Senate every two years. These elected student members are also invited to sit on other Senate committees.**

The Academic Board is the largest board at UQ, and it serves to remind the Senate that it's a university. It is likely that the committee you sit on will end up reporting to the Academic Board either directly or through additional committees. The Academic Board formulates policy on academic matters, including new programs, teaching, learning and assessment, research, promotions, student academic matters, prizes and scholarships. Five student representatives (three undergraduate, two postgraduate) are elected annually. There are a number of central academic committees that report directly to the Academic Board, including the Committee for Academic Programs Policy, Teaching and Learning Committee, the Student Experience Committee and the Research Committee.

**At UQ, there are six faculties:**

- Medicine
- Science
- Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS)
- Engineering, Architecture and Information Technology (EAIT)
- Business, Economics and Law (BEL)
- Health and Behavioural Sciences (HaBS)

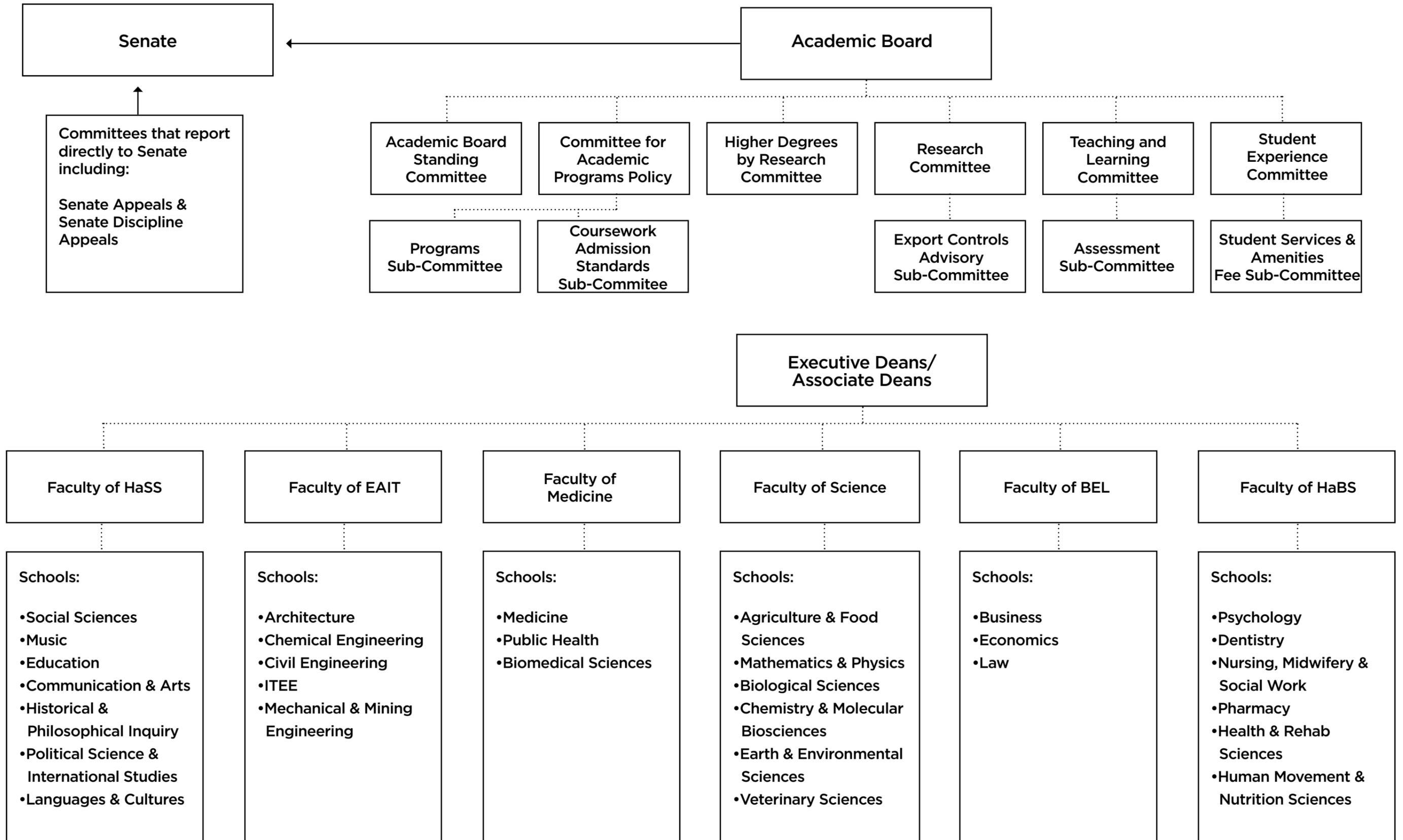
Faculties have a number of committees and boards, generally covering research, teaching and learning, student experience and governance. These bodies will generally report directly to the Executive Dean of that faculty (or otherwise the appropriate Associate Dean). The Executive Dean and Associate Deans are members of the Academic Board and will report information or recommendations to central committees as necessary. Each of the above faculties are composed of multiple schools and institutes which in turn, will have a number of committees that report to the faculty committees.

There are also a number of steering committees, working parties and project boards that are responsible for specific projects (e.g. the UQ Mental Health Strategy, Student Strategy Steering groups). These committees usually report to either Academic Board, the Student Experience Committee, or directly to the appropriate Executive Staff member (i.e. the Deputy-Vice Chancellor or Vice Chancellor).

The University of Queensland has a complex structure and each committee may work differently. The chair or secretary of the committee you sit on should explain what the function and purpose of the committee is and where it reports to.



# Governance structure at UQ





## Training and events for student reps

Through UQU and the Student-Staff Partnerships initiative, student reps have access to a whole range of training to develop key skills, as well as fun events to meet and network with other reps.

### Events for student reps

Welcome and induction events for new representatives will be held each semester to introduce student representatives to their peers. There will also be opportunities throughout each semester for student representatives to meet and mingle with other student reps, to share your experiences and learn from your peers. Check the [UQ Student Representation website](#) for updates!

### Student reps training program

As a representative you will be provided with training opportunities to assist you in making the most of your time in this role.

### The following topics are covered:

- Student feedback: How to collect it and what to do with it
- How to make an impact in the meeting room
- Enhancing your employability as a student rep

Sign up to the [student reps training program](#)

### Community of Practice

Interested in learning more about Student-Staff Partnerships or want to get more involved? The Student-Staff Partnership Community of Practice is a group of staff and students that get together to celebrate successes, solve problems and share best practice. Register to receive email communications about Student-Staff Partnerships - including its [Community of Practice meetings](#).

“To any student with the opportunity to be a student representative, I encourage you to be involved. Not only will you better understand how the University operates and improve the university experience for both current and future students, but you will see personal and professional growth within yourself.”

*Alicia Kirk - Student Representative 2018*

# Key contacts

## Handy contacts for student representatives

### **ssp@uq.edu.au:**

James Forde - Student Partners Coordinator (Representation and Voice). Have any problems or concerns and not sure who you can talk to? James can advise and assist you in your role.

**kaiyin.wu@uqu.com.au:** UQ Union Student Rights VP 2019 - Kaiyin Wu. If you feel more comfortable talking to a peer, the UQ Union is your student union and have plenty of experience in student representation.

### **uquaps.executive@gmail.com:**

Association of Postgraduate Students President 2019 - Selene Cannelli

**employability@uq.edu.au:** Student Employability Centre - for more information about how to develop your employability skills or about how to sign up for the UQ Employability Award.

**Committee-specific contacts:** the contact details for your committee chair and secretary should be provided to you at the commencement of your term, but ask for them if you don't already have them.

## Contacts to assist you with student concerns

### **Student Help On Campus (SHOC):**

A free, independent, short term support service for all UQ students. SHOC can provide you with assistance on matters relating to the following services: Education & Equity, Employment, Gender & Sexuality, Legal, Migration, and Welfare. For more information visit the website: <http://www.uqu.com.au/student-support> or call the UQ Union reception on 3377 2200

### **Sexual Misconduct Support Unit (SMS Unit):**

Book an appointment online here: <https://respect.uq.edu.au/support/sexual-misconduct-support-unit>

### **1800 Respect**

1800 737 732 for 24/7 counselling support

### **Mental Health support:**

- Student Services Counselling Service - book online here: <https://www.uq.edu.au/student-services/counselling-services>
- UQ Counselling 24/7 crisis hotline - 1300 851 998
- Book an appointment with UQ Health - 3365 6210
- For UQ Psychology Clinic appointments - 3365 6451
- Headspace (Taringa is the closest to UQ St Lucia Campus - 3157 1555)
- Lifeline - 13 11 14

### **Bullying and Harassment**

Contact a Discrimination and Harassment Contact Officer for information and assistance:

<https://staff.uq.edu.au/information-and-services/human-resources/conduct-ethics/discrimination/find-contact-officer>

# Acknowledgements

The first version of this handbook was compiled with valuable feedback from UQ students and staff and was authored by Gabii Starr, Emily McConochie and Surabhi Nigam.

## More Information

If you need further information or assistance in finding the right support, contact the Student-Staff Partnerships' team or UQ Union:

E: [ssp@uq.edu.au](mailto:ssp@uq.edu.au)

E: [kaiyin.wu@uqu.com.au](mailto:kaiyin.wu@uqu.com.au)

## UQ Student Affairs Division

SSP@uq.edu.au  
[employability.uq.edu.au/student-staff-partnerships](https://employability.uq.edu.au/student-staff-partnerships)



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