

# **Rep Journal 2024-25**

## **School of Allied Health & Community**

### **Jess Astley**

Hi! I am Department Rep for Allied Health in the School of Allied Health and Community. I attended my department rep training on St Johns Campus.

I have attended the following meetings in my role as department rep:

- Education Council 1

### **Entry 1**

I recently attended the Department Rep Training 2024/25 which covered the following topics..

- Introductions to who is who and their roles in the SU and the University
- What is expected of a Dep Rep and our role within the university and the student union.
- Governance and Meetings that I am expected to attend and how this process can be used to the advantage of hearing the students voice and positively impacting the university as a whole.
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion : What it means and how to implicate policies in our practice as Dep Rep's
- Sustainability

### **Entry 2**

I recently attended our first Education Council of the academic year.

This included being an active part in voicing students' wishes for the betterment of the union and the university experience within the confines of the following topics...

- Matters Arising
- VP education officer updates
- Annual Objectives
- Student council updates
- Policy updates
- Discussions regarding welcome festival
- Current student issues to include recording of lectures and review of how group work is graded
- student council election

### **Entry 3**

As part of my departmental rep role, I was invited to be part of the foundation year lecture on different careers they can stream into. Once said students finish their foundation year, they can advance onto occupational degrees such as nutrition, radiography, occupational therapy and physiotherapy: all of which are represented by myself. For this reason, I was passionate about being a part of the lecture.

I attended alongside other departmental representatives from nursing and paramedic science

to give a short speech about physiotherapy as an occupation, the areas you can work in, how the degree is structured and to answer course-related questions from those interested in the BSc.

#### **Entry 4**

Today, I attended the Health and Science College LTOE to discuss the following matters with the learning and teaching quality enhancement team for each school and their partnered department representatives.

- Approval of previous meeting minutes, of which there were none for Allied Health
- Discuss matters arising, including the improvement in engagement from student representatives, with a plan as to how to continue this.
- Chairs business put forward to be the assessment of the university on retention, progression and completion of students in their degree and what the university can do to better support students.
- Discuss the key strategic priorities of the university, including improving student retention, strengthening academic support (PATs) and also reviewing assessment practice at a subject and course level.
- Academic integrity was talked about at length in regards to Allied Health, amongst other health courses: there is more academic naivety losing students their marks rather than academic integrity, and the university is working hard to improve this through education in the hopes it reduces fail rates.
- Through this conversation, I put forward the difficult situation some, more vulnerable, students are put into by essay mills on social media and in person. Advice given to me to pass down to students and course reps would be to ensure anything you see, hear, or experience is reported to the SU to be handled.
- The NSS undergraduate student satisfaction survey demonstrated that the organisation and management sector of our courses is what needs the most improvement to get the University of Worcester in the top two quartiles. We aim to do this as an institution via student feedback. This, therefore, puts high importance on the response rates of student surveys, and all representatives must emphasise this within their cohorts.
- Due to higher fail rates in some modules, the university has worked to review these modules and make amends to help student retention: actions have been put in place, and some modules have been adapted or stopped.

This meeting helped me gain a larger idea of how the university feedback loop system works and achieve the outcomes needed to support students from the feedback each voice gives.

#### **Entry 5**

When I was a Course Rep last academic year, I loved having the support of my Department Rep available if I ever needed questions answered or topics clarified. However, I often struggled to easily contact them. As well as this, I regularly thought my queries could be answered by another course rep with more experience in the area rather than I furthermore strengthening both of our roles rather than contacting someone later down the chain than us. With these past reflections in mind and my aim of creating a more involved, community-feel to the representative system in Allied Health, I have created an easy-access WhatsApp group for

all course reps to ask me questions, talk about their experiences, and interact with each other. As well as hopefully achieving a more close-knit group of Reps, this could also work towards ensuring all reps have the same information and updates from me regardless of the course they're on or how often they interact with their university inbox.

I have sent out an email with the instructions on how to be added to this chat however, if any Allied Health course rep would like me to add them, please contact me on the email provided.

### **Entry 6**

On the 14th of November 2024, I arranged and hosted an online meeting for my Course Reps to optionally attend. The idea behind this was to allow saved time and place for any reps who wanted to see me face to face, ask any questions or be further involved with other course reps to have designated time to do so.

This was hugely successful, bringing in several reps who wanted topics of an academic and general nature answered with support from myself and other reps. I felt this was a great achievement in my goal to create more of a community between reps in Allied Health.

### **Entry 7**

I recently attended a department rep meeting with the ARC of the Health Sciences, Michelle, and the other department representatives of the school. We discussed current identified issues within our departments and projects that we could work on improving for the benefit of the student body.

The project we decided to work on going forward was assessment and feedback.

As well as this, each department rep put forward their own main aim for the academic year : improving integration of international students in university community, a closer knit academic representation community and encouraging cohorts within departments to network as they would in career settings.

Leaving the meeting, I had a few things to do in order to ensure this meetings impact had the full potential...

- I fulfilled the feedback loop by emailing the course reps in Allied health ; requesting they ensured to investigate the ' what went wells ' and ' even better if's ' of their cohorts assessment and feedback experiences.

- Liaison with the chair of the physiotherapy society to arrange possible socials and events that include not only physios but also occupational therapists and other healthcare students.

### **Entry 8**

This week. I attended a consultation with a senior lecturer of physiotherapy and occupational therapy and course reps from both degrees to discuss the degree apprenticeship from a current student's perspective.

Within the meeting, the layout for the apprenticeship was put forward, and the plan regarding how the university team expected the new apprenticeship students to integrate into the degrees was heavily focused on.

In summary, the apprentices will complete the same competency skills modules and placement dates as the university students and attend said lectures as part of the existing cohort two days a week. As a result, the course reps and I voiced our concerns about the possible strain this could place on already oversaturated placement allocations as well as lecture room capacity, integration of students and apprentices and staff-to-student ratios. The staff, in turn, then explained how they had organised solutions to these concerns.

1. To address the placement allocations...

Employers sponsoring the apprentice's place at the university will be heavily involved in ensuring they can provide additional placements within their trust environment to provide for their apprentices. The idea is that this then doesn't take away from the list of allocations the university has already collated for the students.

2. To address the lecture room capacity.

The new Allied Health buildings completion is proposed for the same time frame that the apprenticeship degree is arranged to begin. This will, in turn, create more space and larger lecture areas for larger cohorts to have the correct environment for effective learning and skills practice.

3. To address the integration between students and apprentices...

Here, there were many discussions about what students felt would ease any unease among the two sections within the cohort: apprentices and students. Everyone agreed that referring to the cohort as 'learners', which every person will be, is inclusive and reflective of equality. As well as this, it was agreed that many benefits could come from having a shared induction experience between physiotherapists, occupational therapists and possibly other vocations such as nutrition and radiography. This way, there is less segregation between cohorts and the feeling of the healthcare community is improved. I then brought in the work I had previously been doing with the health and science department reps to include more healthcare students in mixed socials and events.

4. To address the staff-student ratio:

CSP and RCOT must sign off on the apprenticeship before it can proceed. They will assess the staff-student ratio and compile a report as to whether it is satisfactory for learning or not. The university will act in turn on this.

## **Entry 9**

Meetings Attended: Full School Forum 2024

School Updates:

- 'health and well-being' school being created by joining two departments together, but this doesn't affect the department layout itself
- The course handbook will be live online in the new year, and it would be great to receive feedback from students on how user-friendly it is, how they are to use it, and how it could be made better.
- Dep Reps and ARC are working on an 'assessment and feedback' project to focus on student experience, how the course reps can help with feedback and liaise with the teaching quality head (Rachel Kate) to discuss how we can provide support for feedback.

Feedback on inductions for first years :

- very welcoming but lots of information at once: future induction sessions with necessary facts might need to be encouraged to have written summaries of the sessions with all of the main points outlined

Feedback on return to university:

- team bonding within cohorts is beneficial for networking and comfort in settling into university life: it would be better if this was encouraged between cohorts, too.
- timetable was provided too late especially for those with a child and caring arrangements needing to be planned ahead of time: Elliot in SU is working with the timetable as one of his main aims this year to improve timetabling for students

General feedback to discuss:

- SSLC - course reps would like department reps and ARC to work on a standardised recourse they can use to collate feedback. It would be great if this could combine different routes of collecting information: online, in-person, surveys, etc.
- SU and Hannah's course rep training was very useful; it would be better to have it earlier on before SSLC to better practice skills beforehand.
- Times of SSLC are not always best for reps who want to attend but cannot due to lectures/ placement: this is an ongoing balance between hybrid working, university hours and reps giving up evening time. The best outcome has not yet been reached, but the ARC is constantly updating the preferences of students to find the best solution.

Events coming up:

- All health interprofessional learning days : 3 Mondays in semester 2, where cohorts of the school will be given time to mingle with those they will be working with in a professional environment come graduation.

ACTIONS FOR ME TO TAKE :

- contact course reps to collate feedback on online course handbook in the new year
- assessment and feedback project ( ongoing ) with ARC and other AH dep reps
- create standardised recourse for collecting feedback

### **Entry 10**

I was very proud to have been nominated as November's Department Rep of the Month for " my high engagement to the role, my efforts to create a community of reps, and going above and beyond in my role as department rep"

It means a lot to me that the work behind closed doors has been noticed and my course reps have felt supported in their roles.

### **Entry 11**

On Wednesday, the 5th of February, I held a Semester 2 Course Rep catch up meeting to ensure they all felt they had space to ask questions, feel supported, seek advice or get to know each other a bit more.

I started by introducing myself and allowing others to do the same.

We then discussed the updates I had to share with them and their student peers from Education Council (3) - emailed to those not in attendance

1. Timetabling aims and goals
2. Rep visibility project updates
3. Rep refresher training availability
4. SU election times

Student Issues raised:

- SSLC hard to attend when on placement due to daytime timing
- Lack of Worc Award - volunteer hours go to waste
- Placement feedback - others in the same under-graduate level are more advanced in their knowledge and practice than UoW
- Harshness of marking on assignments with feedback that does not correlate to the marking rubric
- Group work over taking teaching techniques in practical lectures

AOB:

- It was decided that each CR will collect feedback on each of these issues with their cohort to supply in the SSLC meetings in March

## **Entry 12**

I was recently nominated by peers to run for the SU elections.

Whilst this is not a right fit for the career pathway I am choosing to follow in Physiotherapy, I take it as a massive compliment that others believe I uphold the welfare, diversity and equality of Worcester students in a demographic and representative manner, as the SU role models do.