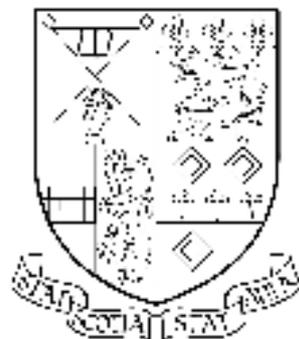


Class Rep Handbook 2018/19

**A GUIDE TO ACADEMIC
REPRESENTATION**



University of St Andrews
Students' Association

Congratulations!

Congratulations on becoming a new Class Representative! You can be very proud of yourself to have been trusted with the responsibility of representing your friends and classmates to your School. Plus it's always a nice feeling to win an election! Class Representatives are the foundation of academic representation at the Students' Association, and they can be very successful in bringing about real and meaningful change. Be innovative, challenge current practice, offer new solutions and enhance learning and teaching at this university!

I hope you enjoy this training. It will help you on your way to becoming an amazing representative!

Best of luck,

Alice Foulis

Director of Education

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What you'll find inside

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Wait, where do I start?

This role is yours, and we want to make sure that you can get the most out of it as possible. Here's a quick checklist for where you can start:

- Have you attended the compulsory Class Rep training?
- Have you met with your School President and the other Class Reps in your School?
- Have you met with your Director of Teaching and the relevant module co-ordinator(s) for the modules you represent to ask about National Student Survey (NSS) data and previous module feedback?
- Have you joined the 'St Andrews Class Reps 2018-19' Facebook group for Class Reps?
- Have you signed up for the 'expansion pack' trainings for the Library, Employability, Social, and Secretary, as relevant to your role?
- Do you know the dates for your Student-Staff Consultative Committees (SSCCs) this year?
- Have you come up with a plan for how you can implement the goals you set at the training?
- Do you know where you can get support if you feel stuck or don't know what to do?
- Have you seen the minutes from the last SSCC meeting?

You're adding on to 600 years of history

Student engagement is an integral part of the learning experience in Scottish Higher Education. From the ambitions of the 'democratic intellect', Scottish Universities have maintained an innately democratic nature in the way they run - especially when it comes to learning and teaching.

We don't run elections simply because they're a bunch of fun. By being an elected officer, **you carry a democratic mandate** to pursue certain objectives and adopt certain tactics in reaching your stated goals.

As a candidate, you campaigned representing a certain vision, with certain goals and priorities for the year ahead. By voting for you, students have expressed their support for your vision for St Andrews. **You're here because students said they wanted you here.**

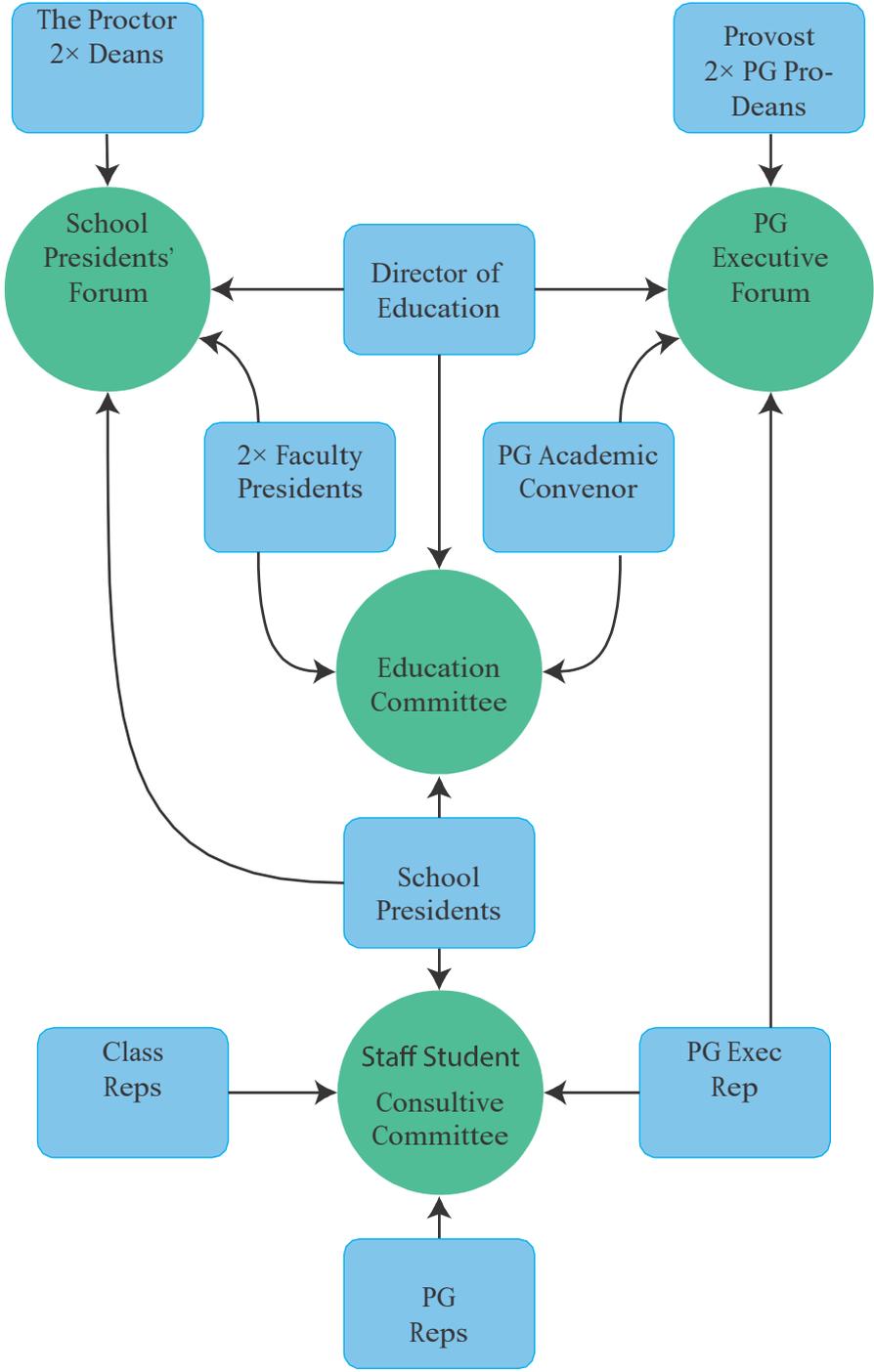
So, if you feel a little out of your league when you're in a room with teaching staff, remember that students put you there to express their opinions and to stand up for them. **You are the expert on the student learning experience.**

No decision should be made without student input, and you are how we make sure that this remains true.

COLLABORATE

Use this space to note your motivations for being a Class Rep and issues that made you choose to candidate yourself.

Academic Representation Structure



Where else are people talking about this?

There's a large number of elected student representatives and a part-time member of staff of the Students' Association who contribute to the system of academic representation.

The **Director of Education** (Alice, doed@) is the full-time sabbatical officer who takes the lead on everything related to education and is the key support officer for every School President. She is taking a year out of her studies between third and fourth year to serve in this position for a full year after being elected in March. She also leads the Students' Association's work on student employability and PG studies.

The **Students' Representative Council (SRC)** is the legally constituted voice of St Andrews students. The two Faculty Presidents (Gianluca & Alisa) sit on SRC to represent the **Education Committee**, which is composed of all 23 School Presidents, 2 Faculty Presidents, the Postgraduate Academic Convenor, and the Director of Education.

School Presidents and Class Reps lead change within their Schools. You are an essential part of the academic representation system to ensure that the consequences of University-level decisions that are felt at the School-level are heard and understood from a student perspective.

Here is how it works

Class Reps collect feedback and students' opinions on the quality of teaching in their School and present it at regular **Student–Staff Consultative Committees** (SSCCs). These meetings happen once or twice each semester and include the Class Reps, the School President, and the relevant academic staff. The School President chairs and convenes the meeting and distributes the agenda to everyone involved.

Before the SSCC meeting, your School President will organise a **Class Rep Forum** to discuss the issues that they want to bring up at the meeting and to brief the Class Reps on the running issues within the School. At these meetings, feel free to bring up anything that you feel is relevant for the SSCC meetings. **After the meeting**, you may again meet with the other Class Reps to debrief from the SSCC meeting and settle actions to be taken in advance of the next SSCC meeting. Always remember to inform your classmates/cohort of the outcomes of each meeting, particularly regarding the issues you brought up.

EDF Funding

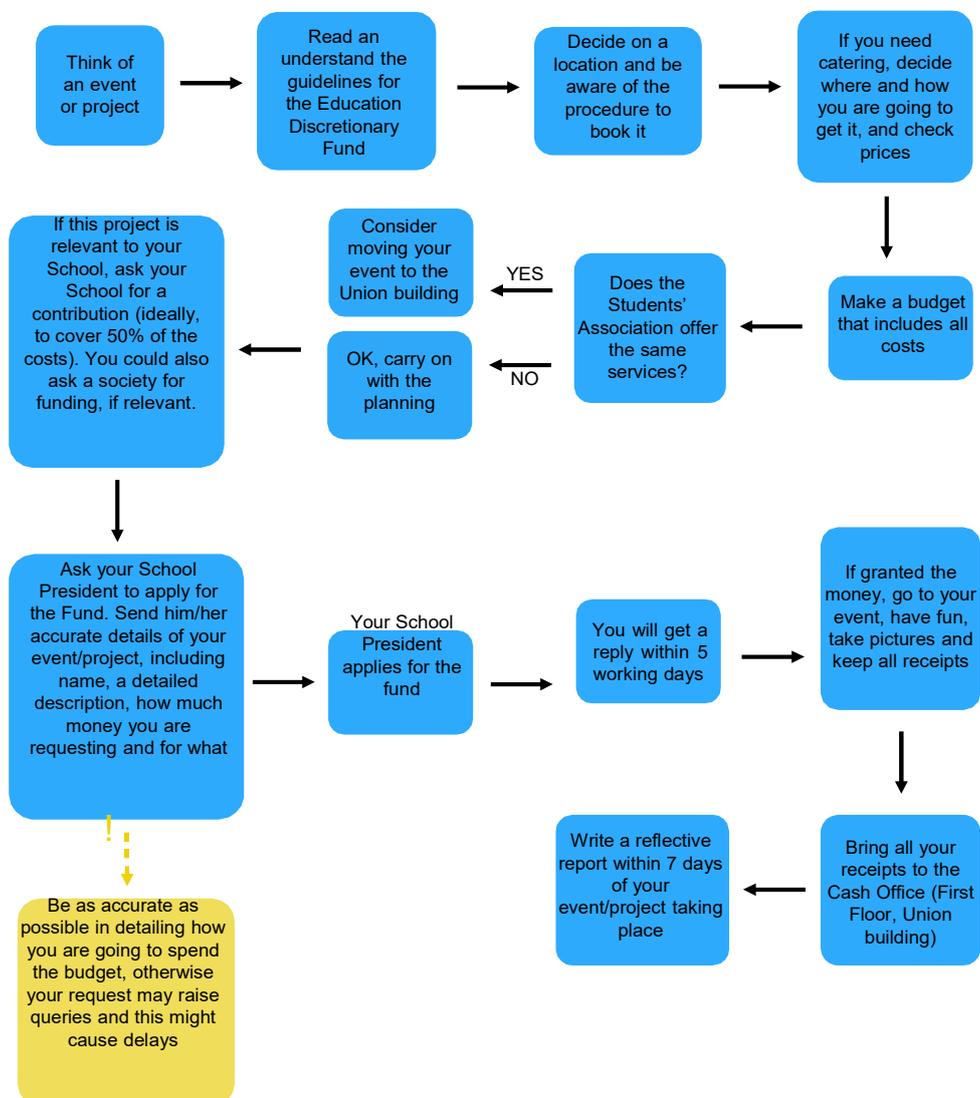
The Students' Association maintains the **Education Discretionary Fund** for School Presidents and Class Reps to finance projects and initiatives related to enhancing learning & teaching. You can apply for the funding through your School President to help finance your projects. We can cover catering for events, speaker fees, newsletter printing, etc.; bear in mind, however, that the fund cannot be used to buy alcohol. Read the guidelines carefully on the relevant section of the yourunion.net website.

Event Planning

How to plan an event/project and apply for the Education Discretionary Fund



A guide for Class Reps
Any questions get in touch doed@



What if the problem is about something beyond my School?

Class Reps might want to change something that affects them and the other students in their modules, but sometimes the response from the teaching staff will be ‘it’s not something that’s set by us!’ In those cases, talk to your School President and have them bring up the issue with the Students’ Association, or contact the Director of Education (doed@).

The **Students’ Association** operates autonomously from the University and is an **independent charity** here to support students. We interact on a regular basis with the University to continually enhance teaching quality and to maintain the standards of teaching throughout every subject and discipline. We also liaise with the various units of the University: the Library, IT Services, CAPOD, Student Services, and the Careers Centre are a few key examples!

If you ever need support for a project that requires some work beyond just the School level, don’t give up on the issue—let us know about it in the Students’ Association, and we’ll lend all the support we can to making your issue heard and understood by the University.

Enhancement Themes Funding

Evidence based on qualitative and quantitative data can be used to help improve the student experience here at University. Do you have an idea for an event, project or resource that revolves around using evidence? If so, **up to £1,000** of Enhancement Theme funding may be available to you. For further information, please visit the [Enhancement Theme Funding Scheme](#) web page or contact enhancementtheme@st-andrews.ac.uk.

Know your role!

On yourunion.net, you'll find a [detailed role description](#) that will help you better understand your remit as a class rep.

It is important that you understand which issues you are supposed to deal with. It is even more important that you are aware of which issues you're **NOT** supposed to deal with. As a general guideline, you should deal with academic matters that involve your (or some of your) colleagues. However, you might encounter some major issues or individual cases that you should refer to the relevant member of staff of the University or the Students' Association. For example, you are not expected to solve personal or disciplinary matters, disputes or appeals. This is not only because your time is not endless, but also because there are members of staff around the University who are trained to address such issues. For example, for academic appeals and other disputes with the University, refer your student to Iain Cupples (inc@)—the Education Advocate of the Students' Association. For money matters, mental health problems, and disabilities, refer them to Student Services. If you're in doubt about making a referral, please contact the Students' Association.

Which issues fall within my remit?

All issues related to the academic nature of your course, in particular those regarding curriculum, teaching and learning quality, learning resources, assessment types, and feedback fall within your remit.

How do I ask my lecturer to change?

A lot of being a Class Rep can involve asking lecturers to change their approach (or, sometimes, to continue doing something well, too!). When you approach a lecturer to talk about something that they do, make sure to apply the following techniques:

1. **Own it!** Start your sentences with ‘I think...’ or ‘I feel...’ to make it clear that you’re stating your opinion on the matter.
2. **Separate the behaviour from their personality.** Don’t tell a lecturer that you think they’re lazy (by and large, they are not!), but say instead that you and other students feel that they aren’t receiving enough feedback to be able to make improvements in their next assessment. The first feels like something that cannot be changed and a personal attack, whereas the second comes across more like a behaviour that can be changed with a little more attention.
3. **Explain the cause and effect.** Help illustrate why you’re bringing up the issue. Mention what impact the lecturer’s decisions and behaviour have on the student learning experience.

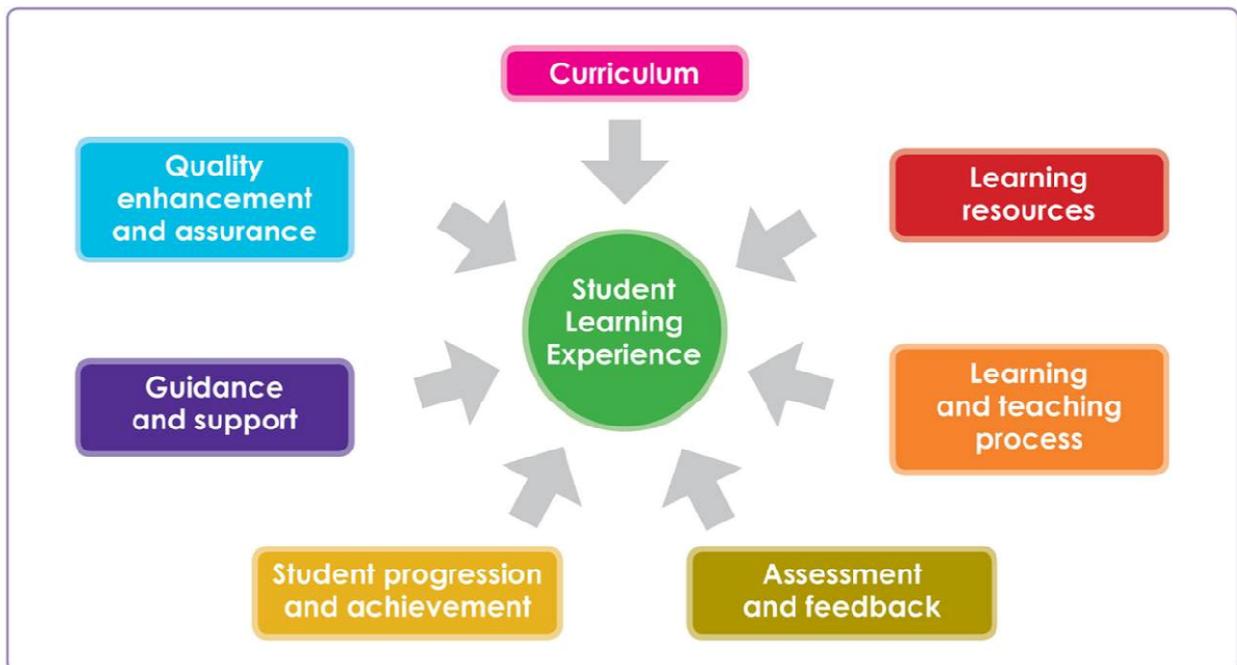
By adopting this approach, you can hopefully start a dialogue with the teaching staff in your School and improve the quality of teaching!

So, I can change things, right? What can I actually change at St Andrews?

Class Reps are an invaluable part of the University because of the expertise you have. You, above all others, are experts in the student learning experience. You have a unique insight into what the practical implications of University and School decisions are on the quality of teaching.

So, what's this 'student learning experience' bit? Well, it has seven components, explained in the diagram below.

This is where you are the expert, and any of these seven things are topics you can bring up to discuss with your lecturers.



Choose one of the 7 components of the Student Learning Experience to work with and make a plan.

What is the process of making change?

Class Reps are genuine agents for change and fantastic drivers for pushing for enhancements to the quality of teaching throughout the University. Here's a quick overview of how to approach an issue:

Dissatisfaction. You need to be able to make a case for why the status quo is no longer sufficient and why things need to change. Think both of how widely and how deeply the dissatisfaction is felt.

Vision. You should have a vision for what the solution is: what changes can be enacted to make the situation better for students.

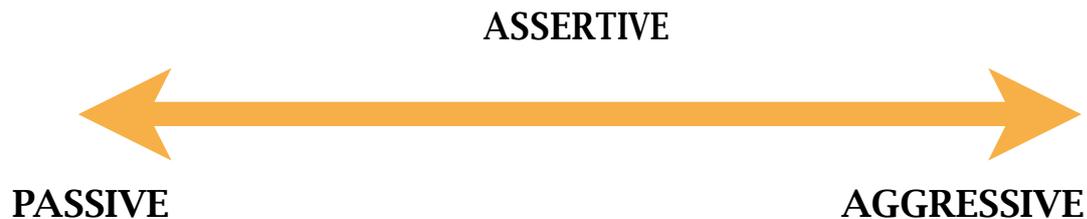
First Steps. What are the small victories that you can achieve now to help gather momentum towards reaching your ultimate goal?

Resistance. You can assume that there will be some natural resistance to changing things from the way they currently are.

You'll need to make sure that student dissatisfaction regarding a situation, your vision for how the solution looks, and your first steps are greater than resistance in order to make change happen.

Assertive relationships have the most thriving long-term benefits

The Assertiveness Spectrum covers the range of behavioural approaches that an individual can take.



Having an **assertive** approach is an effective way for a Class Rep to ensure a positive relationship with the teaching staff. It may also be a strategy to get what you want more easily.

An easy-to-remember formula is the 3-Part Assertion Statement. It may seem a bit clunky at first, but you'll soon find that it's an effective way to build a strong, assertive argument. It comprises a statement of **fact**, a statement of **feeling**, and a statement of **need**. Here's an example:

"A number of students have said that they are having trouble understanding you during your lectures. They feel like they're missing out on valuable parts of the lecture and are less able to keep up with the material as a result. We need you to speak more slowly and clearly in your lectures so that everyone can follow."

In this way, you have conveyed the problem in a factual manner, described the impact that it has on students, and indicated that a change should be made to improve the students' learning experience.

Try to identify your Vision for changing an issue you currently have and list five possible first steps.

You represent diverse student population from a wide range of backgrounds.

The importance of being a Class Rep is that you're working to represent the wide range of opinions felt by all of your classmates. There are a number of things to consider regarding diversity in this respect:

- **Nationality & ethnicity.** Does the material seem understandable both to a British and an international student?
- **Ability.** Do you know what students with disabilities think about the quality of teaching in your modules? Do they feel like the School is meeting their needs?
- **Age.** Are there any mature students in your modules?
- **Living situation.** Do you know how many commuting students there are in your class? How many students in your classes have families or caring obligations?
- **Learning style.** How many students feel like they learn more from an exam than from an essay? How many students would call themselves auditory versus visual learners?

Taking the extra step to ensure that your opinion is representative to a wide range of students helps to more strongly prove your point and make a more effective case to the teaching staff.

Remember that it's your job to represent the views of your classmates, even when you don't personally agree with them. If a number of students have an issue, try to find out why, and whether this is something that can be improved.

Use evidence to show why change matters

Being able to **present evidence** helps to make a case stronger for changing something. This is why collecting feedback from students is an essential skill for Class Reps to have.

Here are a couple of tips on collecting feedback on teaching quality

There are a number of ways to collect quantitative and qualitative feedback. Here are a few examples:

- **Surveys.** A key survey that you can get from your School is the most recent NSS results from last year. You can also make your own surveys or questionnaires, e.g. by using Google Docs.
- **Open polls.** Even a simple 'hands up if you think...' in a lecture can be an effective way to count the impact a change would make in teaching quality.
- **'1 Good, 1 Bad, 1 Random'.** Distribute small slips of paper to your classmates at the beginning of a lecture, asking them to write down one good thing about their module, one bad thing, and one extra thought about anything. Collect them at the end of the lecture; it will give you good spread of information about what's good in your class and what could use with some improvement.
- **Office hours.** You can hold a regular office hour that you publicise amongst your classmates to let them come along and talk about their module with you.

What if it seems like no one cares?

It may seem like people are generally happy with the quality of teaching in their modules, especially if you're asking 'do you think X is good/going well?' That's why we encourage you as Class Reps to **benchmark your questions**. Don't just ask if something works well or is good: set it against a certain criteria. Here are some examples:

- **Original Question:** Do you think the curriculum is good?
- **Benchmarked Question (example):** Do you think there are enough female authors listed in the curriculum?
- **Original Q:** Do you think feedback is good?
- **Benchmarked Q:** In your last feedbacked assessment, did the feedback make you feel like you knew what you could do better next time?

A word for confidentiality and anonymity

Whenever you are collecting feedback, especially if it's qualitative feedback, do your best to ensure that when you take that feedback onwards to the next step as a Class Rep, you're anonymising the data you have. Instead of specifying a student with their name, just say what year they are in and what they said to you. You can still make your point while preserving anonymity.

What else is out there?

Beyond working with your School President, teaching staff, and classmates, there is more that a Class Rep can contribute to. You can help influence the services that the Library, the Careers Centre, CAPOD, and other units provided by the University.

You can get extra training, too!

Specifically for Class Reps, we offer 'Expansion Packs' to train you on how to work on issues that may be of particular interest for you. This year, we are running sessions on building a social community, working with the Library, and taking minutes at SSCC meetings.

Library and Learning Resources training

Building a Social Community training

Secretary training

Dates for all of the above training sessions will be communicated to yourselves once they have been confirmed.

You can also learn more about other professional and transferable skills from CAPOD through the Professional Skills Curriculum.

Proctor's Award

Class Reps and School Presidents can be nominated for the Proctor's Award for the extraordinary work they do in supporting the development of learning and teaching in St Andrews. Find more information on the Students' Association website.

Class Reps Awards

There are also two types of awards specifically for Class Reps:

- School Class Representative of the Year (one in each School)
- Students' Association Class Representative of the Year (one award overall)

Selection of the School Class

Representative of the Year

Representatives can send in an application for the School Class Representative of the Year Award. To do so, they should write a 300-word statement explaining why they believe they are worthy of being receiving the award. The School President will also send a recommendation for the most committed class rep in the School. For the final decision, we will take into consideration both the statement and the recommendation.

This is to reward excellence in academic representation. The School President is not obliged to make a recommendation if they think that no class rep in the School deserves the award.

Selection of the Students' Association Class Representative of the Year

The selected School Class Representatives of the Year will form the longlist for this award. The Faculty Presidents and the Director of Education will shortlist 5 candidates. A judging panel made by the Director of Education, the FPs, and the PG Academic Convenor will choose the winner.

University of St Andrews Students' Association
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Class Rep Directory:
yourunion.net/classreps

Your School President:
yourunion.net/schoolpresidents

Your Academic Library Liaison:
www.st-andrews.ac.uk/library/contact/academicliaison/

Your Director of Postgraduate Studies and Postgraduate Secretary:
www.st-andrews.ac.uk/schools/contacts/dopg/

Your Director of Teaching:
www.st-andrews.ac.uk/schools/contacts/dot/

The University of St Andrews Students' Association's origins date back to 1880s and has been constantly dedicated to supporting the student experience and fostering a positive and inclusive community amongst the students of the University.

The University of St Andrews Students' Association is a charity registered in Scotland, No. SCO19883.
