

Course Reps

Training

In this session



- **Introducing the SU**
- **The basics of academic representation**
- **The structure of academic representation at Oxford**
- **How to do academic representation**
- **Your Divisional Reps**

Introducing the SU



What do we do?

Introducing the SU



- **Oxford SU is the representative body for all University of Oxford students**
- **Every matriculated student (and non-matriculated ContEd students) are automatically members of the SU**
- **The SU is led by 6 annually elected Sabbatical Officers, who are supported by a staff team**
- **Academic representation is an important part of our work**
- **Course reps do the works on the ground towards our goal of representing the student voice!**

Introducing the SU



Sabbatical officers (2024/25) working on academic representation:



**ELEANOR
MILLER
(SHE/HER)
VP
Undergraduate
Education and
Access**



**LAUREN
SCHAEFER
(SHE/HER)
VP
Postgraduate
Education and
Access**



The basics

Understanding
academic
representation

What is academic representation?



The system in which students use their voice to make changes to their educational experience.

Course representation

- **Elected/appointed representatives**
- **Represent the student views on your course**
- **To make sure that courses are informed by students' voices and needs**

What do course representatives do?



- **Seek out views and opinions on academic issues of students on your course**
- **Represent students on departmental committees**
- **Raise issues and give feedback at committee meetings and JCC/GJCC meetings**
- **Communicate regularly with the Divisional Rep on departmental issues and students' feedback**
- **Update students on the discussion at meetings and actions (to be) taken**
- **Liaise with other course reps within your department and beyond**

Take a minute

**What difference do
you hope to make to
Oxford students'
experience ?**



Navigating the University

**The structure of
academic
representation**

University structure

University Council

Education Committee

VP UG/PG Academic and Access

Planning & resource allocation Committee

General Purposes Committee

Personnel Committee

Research Committee

Humanities Divisional Board

Humanities Div Reps

Medical Sciences Divisional Board

Medical Sciences Div Reps

Social Sciences Divisional Board

Social Sciences Div Reps

MPLS Divisional Board

Medical Sciences Div Reps

Continuing Education Divisional Board

OUCE Div Reps

University structure

University Council

Education Committee

VP UG/PG Academic and Access

Planning & resource allocation Committee

General Purposes Committee

Personnel Committee

Research Committee

Humanities Divisional Board

Humanities Div Reps

Medical Sciences Divisional Board

Medical Sciences Div Reps

Social Sciences Divisional Board

Social Sciences Div Reps

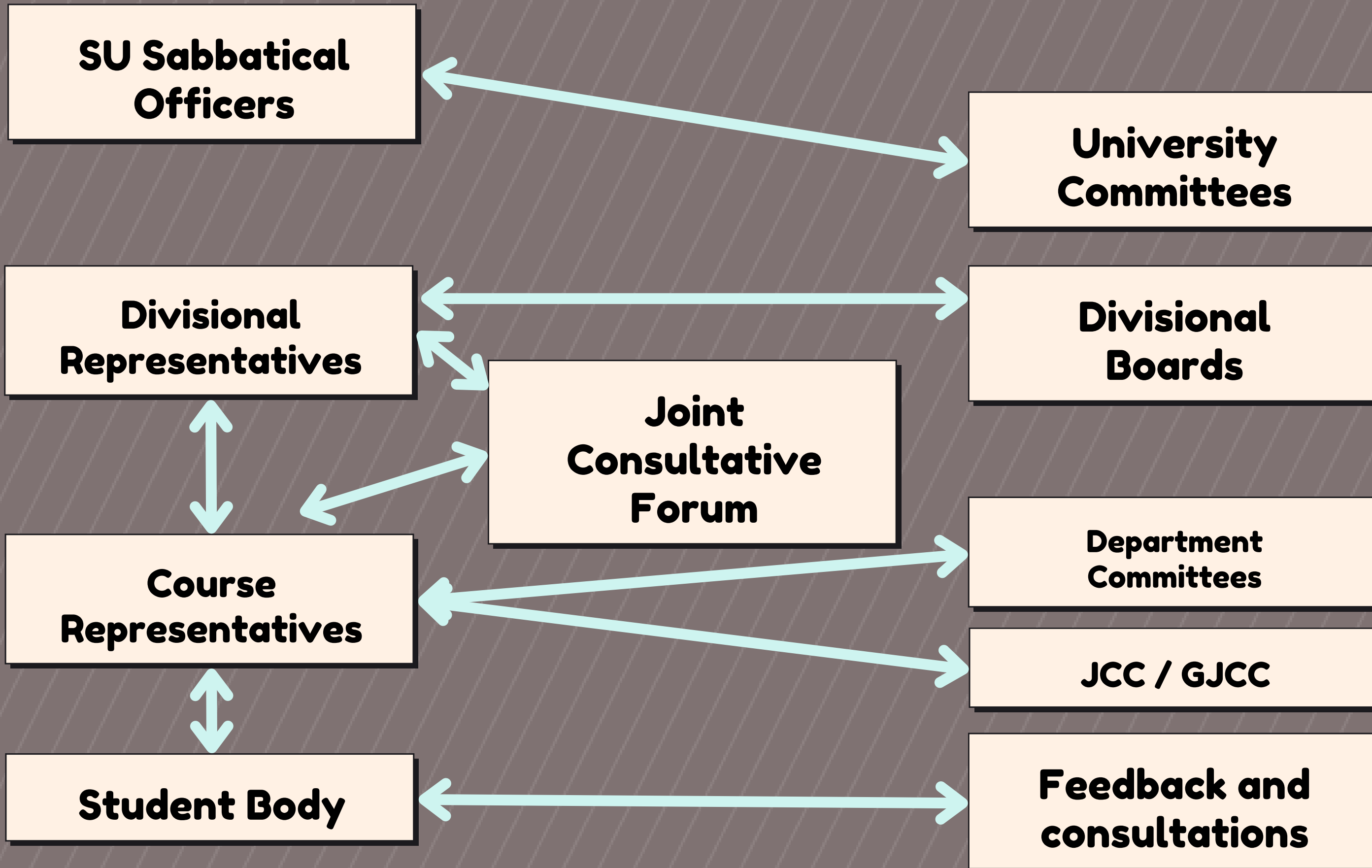
MPLS Divisional Board

Medical Sciences Div Reps

Continuing Education Divisional Board

ContEd Div Reps

Representation



What about colleges?

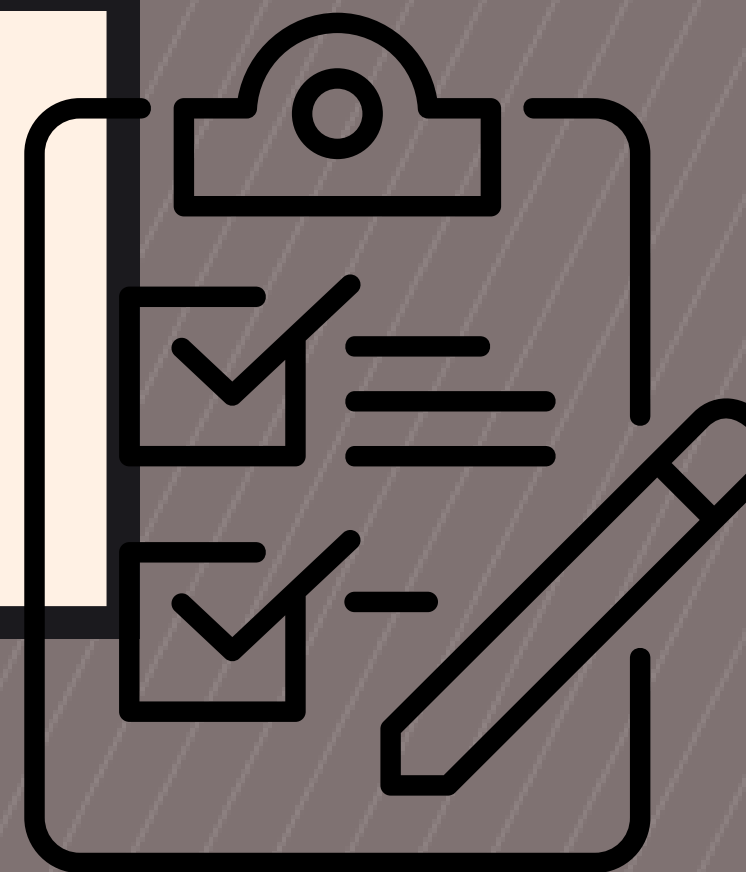


- **Course reps and Div reps represent academic issues at a university departmental/divisional level**
- **Only colleges have the ability to make changes with regards to college based issues**
- **Issues can be passed on to college academic reps**
- **Liaising with college academic reps can be an effective way for a two-tiered approach to change**

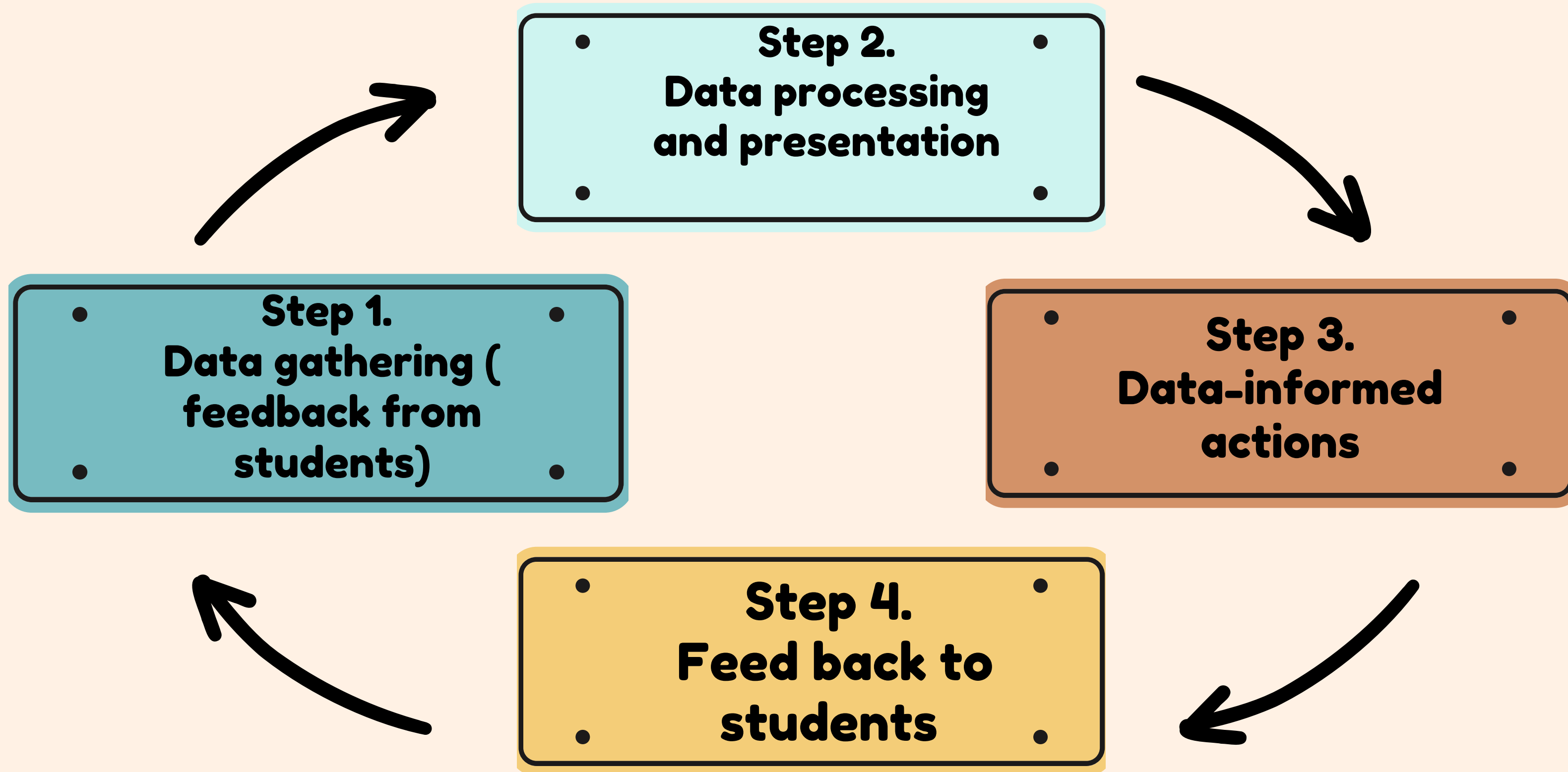


Get practical

**How to do course
representation?**



The cycle of representation



Step 1. Data gathering



Surveys/questionnaires

- **Get to the point!**
- **Anonymous submission forms can encourage people to be more open**

Discussion forum

- **Conversational**
- **Provides more insights into students' views**

Step 1. Data gathering



Informal channels can be very informative

- **After-class chats, WhatsApp groups**
- **Cross-reference and consider the representativeness of this kind of data**

Make use of institutional data

- **Ask your predecessors/the division for previous data / information which has been collected**
- **Build a database for your tenure from day 1**

Make sure you are visible and accessible to students

- **Emails/social media**

Be creative with how you seek feedback and do what you feel works for students on your course!

Remember!

- The student body is very diverse!**
- **Consider if there is evidence / data / research to supplement a point of view e.g journal articles, survey data**
 - **Don't assume a default - consider perspectives from marginalised groups, students from different educational backgrounds, e.g disabled students**
 - **Sometimes going with the majority of students might silence these marginalised voices and experiences.**

Step 2. Data-processing and presentation



Issue selection - discern what issues can be:

- brought to departments**
- passed up to your Div Rep**
- referred to college academic reps**
- referred to other parties (see next slide)**

Note: You do not necessarily have to pass on what each individual thinks. You sometimes will have to use your judgement to decide what to prioritise and the course of actions, always informed by proper consultation with your students.

Step 2. Data-processing and presentation



Signposting

Remember - Course Rep is an academic representation role. We are not training you to be peer supporters and do not expect you to take on serious welfare / admin / personal issues of other students

Step 2. Data-processing and presentation



Signposting

Please signpost any student who approaches you with such issues elsewhere, including:

- Departmental / divisional administrative staff (eg mitigating circumstances, welfare, suspensions)**
- College welfare officers and college advisors / personal tutors / Director of Graduate Studies**
- SU Advice Service (helps with academic appeals, mitigating circumstances and much more)**
- University Counselling Service**
- Disability Advisory Service**

Step 2. Data-processing and presentation



Building a case

- **How many students has this affected?**
- **Is this a problem elsewhere in the uni.?**
- **Do we have any previous data on this issue?**
- **Should you engage any other student reps?**

Present your case to the University

- **Bring your evidence to the appropriate forum - JCC/GCJJ, departmental meetings**
- **Suggest informed solutions**

Navigating Committees



- **Make sure that you can access, read and understand committee papers prior to the meetings**
- **Turn up prepared to meetings**
 - **Read the papers and take note of important issues**
 - **Noting down where you want to make comments can be helpful**
 - **Know who attend those meetings**
 - **Prepare your case**
- **Remember that divisional/academic staff highly value student opinion**
 - **Ask anything that you don't understand**

Navigating Committees



- **Inevitably, you will not know students' views on all issues, but you will have your own opinion on it. In these cases, stress that this is your own perspective as opposed to a representative view**
- **Talk to key stakeholders and other reps outside of meetings**
- **Engage with previous research and data**

Lobbying for change



Co-operation

- A model of partnership
- Finding common interests with the institution and working to support them
- Focus groups, committees, policy work
- Collaboration for targeted policy outcomes

Agitation

- A model of leadership
- Taking a more direct / critical approach
- Raising attention to an issue and putting on pressure
- Challenge existing practices
- Encourage radical reflections



Feedback

- **A model of consultation**
- **Providing staff with information to make decisions concerning students' experiences**
- **Can look like: Conveying students' views in committees or arranging focus groups for staff projects**
- **Informed and sustainable changes**
- **Staff hold the main burden of making changes happen**



Take a minute

**When would you
take a particular
approach?**

Lobbying for change



Remember!

**A GREAT COURSE REP IS BOTH
REACTIVE AND PROACTIVE**

**You are flexible and able to
respond to unforeseen issues
as they arise**

&

**You are conscious of the
existing issues on your
course and think about what
can be done in your capacity
to work on them**

Step 3. Data-informed actions



- **Reps and departmental staff work together to bring about desired changes**
- **Get a clear sense of what the department will commit to on this issue and who is responsible for taking this further**
- **Keep the communication channels open and make sure the department knows if the issues haven't been resolved**

Step 4. Feed back to students



- **Keep your peers up to date!**
- **Make sure they are aware of**
 - **Changes happened**
 - **The timeline for issues that take a while to get resolved**
 - **The reasons why something can't be changed**

Your Divisional Reps 2024/25



Humanities

UG

Jan Huebel (interim, until MT 2024)
jan.huebel@sjc.ox.ac.uk

PGR

Bhadrajee Hewage
bhadrajee.hewage@mansfield.ox.ac.uk

Medical Sciences

UG

Niamh Grant
niamh.grant@stcatz.ox.ac.uk

PGR

Fahad Al-Huda
fahad.al-huda@phc.ox.ac.uk

Your Divisional Reps 2024/25



MPLS

UG

Tracey Saber

tracey.saber@st-hughs.ox.ac.uk

PGT

Raunak Sinha

raunak.sinha@kellogg.ox.ac.uk

PGR

Daiki Tagami

daiki.tagami@hertford.ox.ac.uk

Your Divisional Reps 2024/25



Social Sciences

UG

Jake Pronger

jake.pronger@ccc.ox.ac.uk

PGT

Kenneth Lim

kenneth.lim@education.ox.ac.uk

PGR

Adam Kluge

adam.kluge@lincoln.ox.ac.uk

Your Divisional Reps 2024/25



Department for Continuing Education

Matriculated

Dr Wallen Mphepo
wallen.mphepo@hmc.ox.ac.uk

**Non-
Matriculated**

Chloe Harper-Ashton
chloe.harper-ashton@conted.ox.ac.uk