



**CRANFIELD STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION**

**COURSE REPRESENTATIVE HANDBOOK**

**2016-2017**



## INTRODUCTION

Representation is at the forefront of Cranfield Students' Association (CSA) activities. The CSA Constitution defines one of the organisation's three main objects as follows.

“CSA's objects are the advancement of education of Students at Cranfield University for the public benefit by being the recognised representative channel between Students and Cranfield University”.

The volunteer Course Representatives and School Representatives are the front line in ensuring that this object is met and that the views of students are delivered to the University for the benefit of all.

The Representatives are also a vital link between students and the CSA itself to ensure that both the CSA is made aware of the opinions of the full range of students and also that all students are aware of the services, activities and opportunities provided by the CSA. This two-way communication channel is critical to the effective operation of the CSA for the benefit of its members.

Therefore, the Course and School Representatives are extremely important to the University and the CSA, and hence to students themselves if they are to receive the best possible experience during their time at Cranfield University.

The CSA expresses its thanks to all of you for volunteering for these roles, and also hopes that you will derive a great deal of satisfaction and benefit from performing them to the best possible standard.

It is with this in mind that this handbook aims to help you in your role. It contains information on what is expected of you, how to go about achieving your aims and where to get help and support if you need it.

***Thank you!***

A copy of this document is available on the CSA website.

[www.mycsa.org.uk](http://www.mycsa.org.uk)

## THE ROLE OF THE *COURSE* REPRESENTATIVE

A Course Representative is the voice of their fellow students following a particular course of study. They should be selected by their peers as the best person to carry out that function. They may also represent larger groups of students, either by joining together with other Course Representatives or by working with School Representatives on a common problem.

The CSA believes that students should be the first priority of the University, and the Course Representatives help keep Schools and Departments focused on that objective. A Course Representative may be involved in the following roles.

- Raise questions and concerns
- Provide positive and negative feedback
- Monitor the quality of academic provision. In particular, to report any deficiencies in exam or coursework feedback directly to the Head of School. If necessary, this should be in the form of an official complaint following guidance from the CSA
- Engage with students and canvass their views
- Campaign for positive change
- Encourage students to take part in student surveys
- Encourage students to take part in the Student-Led Teaching Awards (SLTA)
- Sit on appropriate course, departmental or other committees
- Liaise with the CSA School Representatives to channel information

Course Representatives also link students to the CSA. In particular, they provide a voice for those students who do not necessarily come into the CSA building or take part in CSA activities.

Engaging with your fellow students can be difficult, especially with the less vocal members of your course. If you want some input, do not be afraid to ask a lecturer for a few minutes at the end of a lecture to talk to your students or ask their opinion on a subject. However, the best way of engaging students is to go and talk to them and (most importantly) listen to what they have to say. You have to go to them, as they will not come to you until there is a real problem.

This may seem like a lot of responsibility, and in many ways it is, and therefore a role to take seriously. However, there are a lot of people to help and support you, so don't be daunted.

Equally, do not feel that you have to do everything. Talking to your fellow students and making just one change or improvement that benefits them should be considered a major success in the role of Course Representative.

## **THE ROLE OF THE *SCHOOL* REPRESENTATIVE**

There are two CSA School Representatives for each school, one for Research and one for Education (Taught Courses). These are elected students and report to the CSA Executive Committees.

Their main roles are as follow.

- Provide a voice for students in individual schools, reflecting the differing priorities and local needs of students. They concentrate on finding out what improvements students want, and then working on a campaign to meet those needs.
- Sit on School Committees, to represent students within a School's academic structure.
- Sit on the University's Research & Innovation or Education Committees as appropriate, dealing with cross-campus and cross-University issues.
- Provide a link between the Course Representatives and both the University / School and the CSA. To this end they should regularly communicate with Course Representatives, and organise, together with the CSA President and Research Representative, at least one meeting per term of all students within their School to discuss issues of mutual concern.
- Take an overview and identify similar issues that are occurring in different departments and can discuss issues with other members of the CSA Executive(s) to formulate an action plan as required.
- Be the first point of contact for a Course Representative looking for support. It is vital that they maintain good communications throughout the year.

## THE DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURE OF THE CSA

The aim of this section is to show where you as Course Representatives fit into the CSA's organisation structure, and how you can ensure that the voices of your fellow students are heard outside your own department.

Executive Officers are elected to represent students. They are available to all students, and Course Representatives should be free to consult them, especially on the roles for which they have been elected. A full list of Officers is available on the CSA website.

Executive Committees are responsible for student representation and campaigns. Their role is to drive positive change, and to do this effectively they need input from all students, which means Course Representatives have a vital role.

Student Outreach Meetings take place towards the end of the Autumn term in each School. They provide an opportunity for Executive Officers to meet students locally and less formally than at General meetings. Course Representatives can use these meetings to both engage with students and raise issues with the Executive.

Annual General Meeting (AGM) is a cross-campus meeting that deals with the formal business of the CSA. It usually takes place in February, and includes opportunities to question Officers and set policy. Again, it is important that Course Representatives and individual students attend.

The Board of Trustees is the highest committee of the CSA. It includes three external trustees, but has a majority of student trustees. The Board deals with matters of CSA strategy, finance, human resources, health & safety and other matters that may significantly impact the organisation. The contact details of the trustees are on the CSA website, and all are available to students who have issues that they wish raised at a strategic level.

## MEETINGS AND COMMITTEES

Meetings and committees can be daunting if you have never been involved with these before. This is especially true of University committees, which can be run on very formal lines and you may be sitting alongside senior members of the University. The following are a few guidelines that you might find helpful:

- Remember that you have a right to be there. Do not be overawed by the occasion.
- The Chair of the Committee, or organiser of a meeting, is there to help. Don't be afraid to ask for a meeting in advance or arrive early to ask them for guidance or clarification.
- Do your homework. Read the minutes of the last meeting and the agenda. If there are items that might require a student viewpoint, try to find out what your students think in advance. However, on any item you may well be asked by the Chair "what do students think?", so be prepared for this at all times.
- Participate and be proactive. Ask questions and make a contribution to the meeting. However, do not feel that you have to give an opinion on everything, especially if you have nothing to say on a particular item, as this will dilute your important points.
- If you are presenting an issue, make sure you are well prepared, preferably with facts rather than vague ideas. Ensure that your item is on the agenda, if there is one, as this will help prevent your item being held over to the next meeting.
- Be polite. This means arriving on time, being appropriately dressed, listening to the views of others and presenting your views in a measured manner.
- Remember that most decisions are made before a committee or meeting takes place; there is a great deal of rubber-stamping. Do not be afraid to canvass the opinion of people who are going to be there in advance, take their views on board and modify your position to ensure that you achieve a positive result.

## SUPPORT AND DIRECTION

There are a number of people within the University who can help Course Representatives if they have a problem or are not sure what to do. School representatives and CSA Executive Officers are a good first step. In particular, the CSA President is available to talk to any student.

CSA President 2016-17    Kelechi Anyaoha    [csapresident@cranfield.ac.uk](mailto:csapresident@cranfield.ac.uk)

The CSA staff are also there to help, especially those with a welfare role, and they will be able to re-direct you if necessary.

CSA Co-ordinator                      Sue Richardson                      [csa@cranfield.ac.uk](mailto:csa@cranfield.ac.uk)  
General Manager                      Martin Davey                      [m.davey@cranfield.ac.uk](mailto:m.davey@cranfield.ac.uk)

Within your own department, an issue can be raised at an appropriate level, whether that is an individual lecturer, the course director, departmental administrators or heads of departments.

The University Diversity Manager is Hiran Odedra ([h.odedra@cranfield.ac.uk](mailto:h.odedra@cranfield.ac.uk)) and she can help with a range of issues. In addition, Dignity at Work & Study Advisers and Learning Support Officers are based in each School; up-to-date lists of these advisers are available on the appropriate web pages.

<https://intranet.cranfield.ac.uk/hrd/diversity/Pages/DignityatWork.aspx>

In many cases, especially for general welfare or academic issues, students should be directed to the Student Advice Centre in Building 45 on the Cranfield Campus.

At Shrivenham, support is centred at the Welfare Office/CSA Office in the Slim Building.

Professional advisors will be able to provide support, or signpost to more specialised services. They will provide telephone or email advice for either campus.

<https://intranet.cranfield.ac.uk/Students/Pages/Welfareandsupport.aspx>