

# **How can we better support the student rep system?**

## **An Investigation & Analysis into Cardiff University's Computer Science & Informatics Student Rep System with Recommendations & Proposals**

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## **Abstract**

This project is an investigation & analysis into Cardiff University's Computer Science & Informatics Student Rep System with regards to 'How can we better support the student rep system?' and subsequently providing recommendations and proposals based on the findings. One of the main purposes of this project was to identify the objectives required to make this project successful by breaking down several larger issues and complex scenarios within the student rep system. It was found that some of the student rep co-coordinator's perceptions were correct, while other issues or different perspectives were also uncovered. Soft Systems Methodology was used to collect all these different perspectives and determine the 'bigger picture' of the student rep system.

This project has delivered different recommendations; some have been implemented and put to use during the year whereas other recommendations may take a lot longer or more work to put into place. There are also two proposals which are on a larger scale to implement and a Business Case has been produced as part of this. Furthermore a Conceptual Model has also been created that will aid in future understanding of relationships and perspectives between activities within the student rep system.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank my supervisor, Helen Phillips for her help throughout this project by providing an interesting and relevant project which will have impact on the school. I would also like to thank all the student reps and student staff panel members who participated in questionnaires, the focus groups which provided general information of interest to this project; as well as all the student reps from the following universities (Cardiff University (Law, Engineering, CompSci), Brunel, Hertfordshire, Manchester, Kent & South Bank) which allowed me to gain insight into the election process and workings of other universities. Additionally, I also thank Tom Spare from Cardiff Student Union for the insight he provided into Student Union related services and the points of contacts required to implement particular ideas within this project.

## **Introduction & Approach**

This project involves reviewing the current student rep system (current problems/issues and what works well) used within Cardiff School of Computer Science & Informatics for Undergraduate students. The overall aim of this project is to find a comprehensive set of recommendations & proposals to improve the system will include an integration of tools or package system that can be used by the student rep service to address any current issues identified during my research.

From speaking to the student rep coordinator it was mentioned that the main problems the school are aware of revolve around communication, engagement and the complexity of all the different perspectives and viewpoints and how to best provide an effective student rep service for everyone. The coordinator is aware of these issues and have put some elements of solutions in place such as 2 reps on larger courses and degree programmes, however are still unsure how to get an effective communication loop going.

From the initial discussion with the student rep coordinator the following objectives were set to essentially 'find out the issues and provide a means to solve them'.

My objectives (as discussed in initial report) are to:

- Identify and resolve current issues
  - Investigate communication and vital data/information/knowledge required by stakeholders through Knowledge Management
  - How to best advertise (promote) the student rep service in the future
  - A recommendation of a new system, integration of tools of a suitable package
  - Improve the way the school can demonstrate changes that have happened
- 
- Consider timetabling issues regarding student staff panel (secondary objective)
  - Improve the way student reps are elected (secondary objective)

It was mentioned that there are around 27 student reps across the different degree programmes in the Undergraduate's part of the school including placement students. There is also a chair and a secretary who attend 3 student staff panel meetings a year. In addition there are also Student Staff Panel meetings for Postgraduate and Postgraduate Research.

My approach will be mainly focused on Undergraduates. It will consist of initially finding out via questionnaires from students and staff what works effectively and what does not work well in all aspects of the student rep service from the panel meetings to rep election and using the rep service. I will conduct a Statistical Analysis to ensure the effectiveness of the sample size as well as on the information gathered. I will conduct a Knowledge Management exercise to find out what data/information/knowledge stakeholders involved with the rep service need in order to shape potential communication channels. I plan on conducting Student Profiles (user stories) which will identify different needs within different types of students and use Soft Systems Methodology to put together all the different aspects involved in the project to create an overall understanding of the student rep system. Using these procedures I will then identify and express problems that will help to confirm the proposed solutions, recommendations and design which will accomplish the objectives. From this point I should be able to provide a set of initial proposals and recommendations to pass through a focus group of student reps to test viability and gain further ideas before my final proposals to improve the student rep service.

## **Initial Questionnaire – Student Rep Service Findings:**

The initial questionnaire will collect a basis of information of people's opinions and ideas of the current service at the school of Computer Science & Informatics. From the information collected I will be able to analyse and highlight problem areas and also identify any patterns. This will allow the creation of recommendations and an action plan of how to progress forwards with the project and its main focal points. The results of this student questionnaire and also the staff questionnaire are extremely valuable to the project and it will affect the overall scope and focus of the entire project. The aim is to get as many respondents as possible.

### **Statistical Analysis:**

Although it would be ideal to obtain questionnaire answers from all students, this was not practical in the time frame given so it was necessary to obtain results from a sample. Sampling is a procedure by which members of a population are picked for analysis. The objective is to make certain observations upon the members of the sample and then, on the basis of these results, to draw conclusions about the characteristics of the entire population. There are two ways to select a sample:

- Haphazard Sample – constructed by arbitrarily selecting individual sample members
- Random Sample – this process operates so that each member of the population has an equal chance of being selected into the sample

For this project we will be using Random Sampling by sending across an email to each block (year of students) containing a link to the questionnaire which will ensure the entire population receive the opportunity to have equal chance to participate.

To analyse the results and deduce relevant findings the following statistical analysis methods will be used:

- Mode – the most frequently occurring score: to identify most common opinions and issues
- Mean – to find the average score: to identify the general opinion across all students
- Variability – to describe the spread of scores using Sample Standard Deviation (a measure of variability around the mean): A low standard deviation means that most of the numbers are very close to the average (most students share the same views). A high standard deviation means that the numbers are spread out (students have vastly different views).

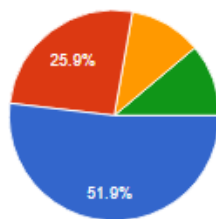
### **Demographics:**

As part of this questionnaire I have taken some demographics (Year of Study, Age, Gender, Current Degree Scheme) this will allow me to narrow down results to different year groups which may identify particular problem areas specific to the year or degree scheme. Similarly Age and Gender may identify if its issues just mature students face or females etc.

*Demographic results of the survey can be found in the file Initial Questionnaire Student\_Rep\_Service\_Responses.xlsx in Other Files submitted with this project.*

Analysis of demographics - A total of 27 students across all degree schemes and year groups participated in the survey including the National Software Academy in Newport. Numbers obtained in each degree scheme are fairly representative of the number of students taking that degree which helps to ensure that general results are not heavily biased towards a particular degree scheme. 6 females and 21 males took the survey with a ratio of 3.5:1 (male:female) – roughly the male to female ratio in computer science (all degree schemes) is around 10:1 (male:female) therefore perspectives may be slightly skewed by female opinion. Participants Year wise and also Age wise is also in line with expectations however I did not manage to obtain any students currently on Placement which is something that would have been quite valuable to this project.

#### Current Degree Scheme (Demographics)

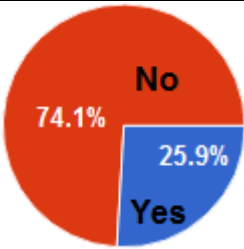
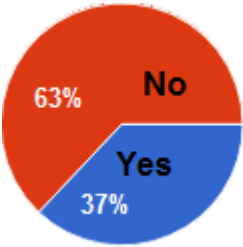
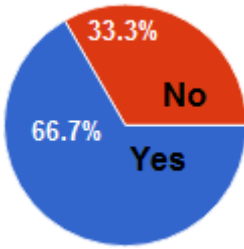
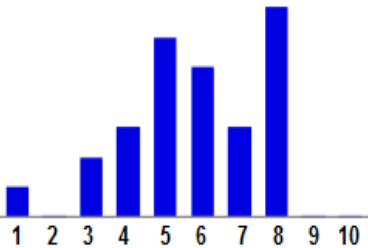


Computer Science (ANY)	14	51.9%
Business Information Systems	7	25.9%
Software Engineering	3	11.1%
National Software Academy (Newport)	3	11.1%

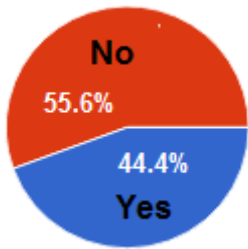
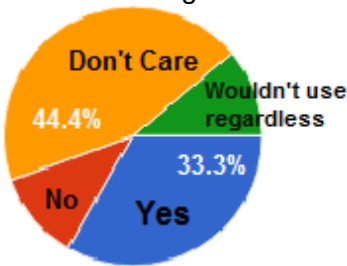
#### Results:

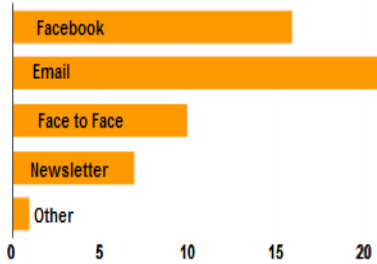
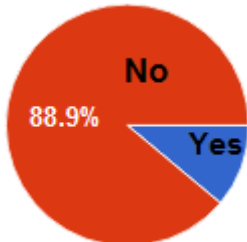
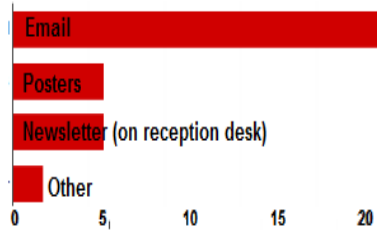
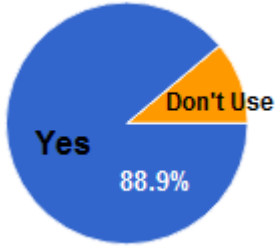
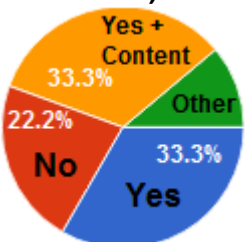
\*Full Questions and Results/Answers may be found in Initial Questionnaire Student\_Rep\_Service\_Responses.xlsx in Other Files submitted with this project\*

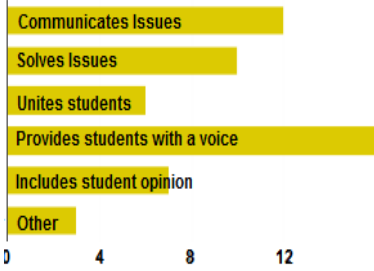
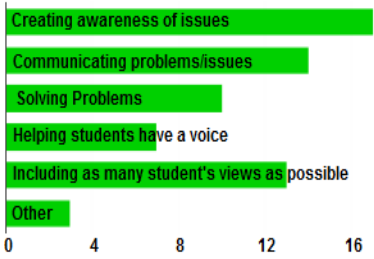
Question	Results	Findings
<b>1)</b> Do you know who the student reps for your course/year are? <b>1.1.</b> If YES – How/when did you find this information out?	Yes – 16 No – 11  <b>1.1)*</b> For exact comments see Initial Questionnaire Student_Rep_Service_Responses.xlsx in Other Files submitted with this project	Although at first appearance it looks like ~60% of people know about the student rep service it is clear from the follow up question that the problem is actually significantly greater as 7 of the respondents are student reps themselves indicating that around 65% do not know who their reps are. 3 respondents only knew either once they had a problem or by word of mouth. The majority know either from a circulated email or via Facebook.
<b>2)</b> Have you previously been/are a student rep?	Yes – 7 No – 20	This question indicates that 1/3 of the respondents of this questionnaire are student reps themselves and so some of their responses later maybe more bias particularly

	 <p>No 74.1% Yes 25.9%</p>	regarding information on how to become a rep																														
<b>3)</b> Have you ever used the student rep service? <b>3.1.</b> If Yes – Why did you use the student rep service?	Yes – 10 No – 17  <p>No 63% Yes 37%</p> <p><b>3.1)*</b> For exact comments see Initial Questionnaire Student_Rep_Service_Responses.xls in Other Files submitted with this project</p>	It is clear from the comments related to 'Yes' that at least two respondents are reps themselves e.g. 'to support students and raise concerns'. Which means less than a 1/3 of the responders have actually used the service. The main reasons are noted as 'exam issues' and 'module related problems'																														
<b>4)</b> Do you think the student rep service needs improving?	Yes – 18 No – 9  <p>No 33.3% Yes 66.7%</p>	It is clear that the student rep service needs improving from these results – due to a significant number of reps taking the survey; this may even indicate that some of the 'no' responses were from reps themselves and therefore definite improvement is required.																														
<b>5)</b> How would you rate the student rep service (1 terrible – 10 excellent) *Note this is not rating the reps themselves but the service the school provides*	 <p>Mode = 5            Mean = 5.78            Standard Dev = 3.36</p>	<table border="1"> <tbody> <tr> <td>Terrible: 1</td> <td>1</td> <td>3.7%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>0</td> <td>0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td>2</td> <td>7.4%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4</td> <td>3</td> <td>11.1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5</td> <td>6</td> <td>22.2%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>6</td> <td>5</td> <td>18.5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>7</td> <td>3</td> <td>11.1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>8</td> <td>7</td> <td>25.9%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>9</td> <td>0</td> <td>0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Excellent: 10</td> <td>0</td> <td>0%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>None of the participants rated the service 9 or 10 which indicates that there is definitely scope for improvement. Furthermore there are some high votes at the lower end of the spectrum suggesting overall improvements and a number of factors will need to be involved to increase the</p>	Terrible: 1	1	3.7%	2	0	0%	3	2	7.4%	4	3	11.1%	5	6	22.2%	6	5	18.5%	7	3	11.1%	8	7	25.9%	9	0	0%	Excellent: 10	0	0%
Terrible: 1	1	3.7%																														
2	0	0%																														
3	2	7.4%																														
4	3	11.1%																														
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6	5	18.5%																														
7	3	11.1%																														
8	7	25.9%																														
9	0	0%																														
Excellent: 10	0	0%																														



		score. Overall there are 12 votes under a score of 5 and 15 votes over a score of 5
<p><b>6)</b> Do you know how the student reps are chosen?</p> <p><b>6.1</b> If Yes – Do you think this is a good process?</p>	<p>Yes – 12 No – 15</p>  <p><b>6.1)*</b> For exact comments see Initial Questionnaire Student_Rep_Service_Responses.xlsx in Other Files submitted with this project</p>	<p>Due to 7 reps taking the questionnaire this means the answers should be re-adjusted for the general class audience to Yes – 5 votes and No – 15 votes suggesting only 1 in 3 students know how the process to become a rep works.</p> <p>Furthermore the comments from the people who said 'Yes' they know how the process works said the 'process is quite unclear', 'needs advertising better', is 'very ineffective' and 'it's not great'. There are a whole host of similar negative comments which definitely highlights this as one of the main issues students are having.</p>
<p><b>7)</b> Would you participate / provide more feedback to the student reps if the process was more anonymous *e.g. rep doesn't know who you are*</p>	<p>Yes – 9 No – 3 Don't Care – 12 Wouldn't use regardless- 3</p> 	<p>Although creating a way students can provide feedback anonymously seems over the top for 9 students – if you consider 27 respondents as a percentage of the student cohort (roughly 350 people) across the whole of the Undergraduate school then 9 people roughly represent 108 students who would benefit from an anonymised process. This is around a 1/3 of students.</p>
<p><b>8)</b> How would you like student reps to communicate with you?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Facebook – 16 (59.3%)</li> <li>➤ Email – 21 (77.8%)</li> <li>➤ Face to Face – 10 (37%)</li> <li>➤ Newsletter – 7 (25.9%)</li> <li>➤ Other – 1 (3.7%)</li> </ul>	<p>It is clear from these results that aiming to cater for a wide variety of preferences will best catch the target audience. Facebook &amp; Email being most popular indicate that if a email is sent across the block then the same information content should also be posted on the Facebook Group. A</p>

	 <p>Facebook Email Face to Face Newsletter Other</p> <p>0 5 10 15 20</p>	<p>surprising amount indicated face to face and this may be more beneficial for specific queries or informal chats to find out general opinion.</p>
<p><b>9)</b> Do you know where to find out what changes have happened because of the student rep service?  <b>9.1.</b> How would you like changes communicated to you?</p>	<p>Yes – 3 No – 24</p>  <p><b>9.1)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Email – 24 (88.9%)</li> <li>➤ Posters – 6 (22.2%)</li> <li>➤ Newsletter at reception – 6 (22.2%)</li> <li>➤ Other – 2 (7.4%)</li> </ul>  <p>Email Posters Newsletter (on reception desk) Other</p> <p>0 5 10 15 20</p>	<p>The responses to this question highlight this as a major issue and concern that needs to be addressed – considering 7 reps took the survey this indicates that even the majority of the student reps themselves do not know where to find out what changes have happened. This is a major issue because if people don't know the benefits or the actions of using the student rep service then gradually less and less people become involved and the system collapses as a whole.</p> <p>88.9% of respondents would like a email to keep them updated about changes – this is a simple solution that should have high success and overall impact.</p>
<p><b>10)</b> Do you have Facebook?  <b>10.1.</b> If Yes – Are you part of the CompSci Group? Do you see student rep content there?</p>	<p>Yes – 24 No – 0 Yes but don't Use – 3</p>  <p><b>10.1)</b></p>  <p>Yes (Part of Group) – 9</p>	<p>As assumed it is correct to say the majority of the school have Facebook – this suggests the high result of 59.3% received above for Facebook as a form of communication between the reps and the students. However although everyone has Facebook there are 6 people who are not part of the group and a further 9 people who are part of the group but don't see rep related content. Using this number of 15 (9+6) in the sample of 27 responders suggest over half the school</p>

	<p>No (not part of group) – 6  Yes (Part of group + see rep content there) – 9  Other - 3</p>	<p>are missing out on student rep content if information is only located and posted on Facebook. If this number is calculated as part of the student cohort it indicates around 180 students are missing out on content.</p>
<p><b>11) What do you think the rep service does well?</b>  <b>11.1. What do you think the rep service needs to improve on?</b></p>	<p>➤ Communication Issues – 12  ➤ Solves Issues - 10  ➤ Unites students - 6  ➤ Provides students a voice – 16  ➤ Includes student opinion – 7  ➤ Other – 3</p>  <p style="text-align: center;"><b>11.1)</b></p> <p>➤ Creating awareness of issues – 17  ➤ Communicating Problems/Issues - 14  ➤ Solving Problems - 10  ➤ Helping students have a voice – 7  ➤ Including many student views – 13  ➤ Other – 3</p> 	<p>It is clear from the results of this question that the students feel that the student rep service is valuable to them it 'provides students with a voice' and helps to 'communicate issues'.</p> <p>However it needs to work on 'creating awareness of issues', 'communicating problems/issues' and 'including as many student views as possible'. This suggests that the majority of the school are unaware of current problems or would like to be consulted for their opinion. 'Solving Problems' was also quite high and I think this is because solutions that are put in place are not being announced effectively to the students which was indicated by a previous question where only 3 responders knew where to find out about changes that had happened because of the student rep service.</p>
<p><b>12) What information do you feel the student reps need to provide you?</b></p>	<p><b>12)*</b> For exact comments see Initial Questionnaire Student_Rep_Service_Responses.xlsx in Other Files submitted with this project</p>	<p>'Other issues people have raised so if you have an opinion you can give it', 'what has been discussed in SSP meetings' and 'what's actually happening' – these comment links in well with the findings in question 11 that students want to have 'awareness of issues' and 'include as many student's views as possible'.</p>

		Worryingly there are comments saying 'how to contact them and what they're working on', 'what the reps actually do', 'anything, I've never been informed of anything' suggesting a lot of students generally have no clue who the reps are, what their purpose is or even how to use the service.
<b>13)</b> Any other comments	<b>13)*</b> For exact comments see Initial Questionnaire Student_Rep_Service_Responses.xlsx in Other Files submitted with this project	There are comments left here regarding 'what is the point of the student reps?' 'everyone should know who the reps are' 'nothing credible has come of it' there's 'no real system' and 'needs significant improvement' which shows the extent and deepness of the issues that need to be addressed.

### **Mean / Mode / Standard Deviation:**

The Mean, Mode and Variable (using Standard Deviation) was calculated for question 5 - How would you rate the student rep service (1 terrible – 10 excellent). This will help find out if most students share the same views (numbers are close to the average) or students have vastly different views (high standard deviation).

The results collected from the questionnaire were:

Terrible: 1	1	3.7%	From this the calculations were made:  Mode = 5 Mean = 5.78 Standard Dev = 3.36 (for full working out see appendices)  Therefore we can conclude that student's generally share the same opinion and view that the student rep system does need improving and is only 'average' score 5.
2	0	0%	
3	2	7.4%	
4	3	11.1%	
5	6	22.2%	
6	5	18.5%	
7	3	11.1%	
8	7	25.9%	
9	0	0%	
Excellent: 10	0	0%	

### **Summary of Findings and Update of Objectives:**

From looking at all the numbers in each question and the several comments received which show some real insight into some of the major issues; I have partially changed the objectives of the project to address some of the major concerns. There are clearly main issues starting right at the beginning of the process which is a lack

of knowledge of the service, who the reps are and how to engage with them. Once those issues have been addressed it will be easier to solve other issues such as a lack of communication of problems, low engagement levels and lack of information regarding outcomes of problems and if they were addressed or not. Due to all the new objectives being quite important the new objectives have been prioritised on a scale of 1 – 3 based on how critical they are – if there is time to broaden the scope of the project at a later stage other more medium to low objectives will be considered:

- 1: critical objective – impacts other objectives' successfulness
- 2: important objective – solves major issues/problems,
- 3: valuable objective – increase satisfaction levels and aid/enhance other objectives (adds value)

### **My Main Objectives will be:**

<b>1) Ensuring the student cohort know who their student reps are for the course/year and how to contact or reach out to them for help</b>	
<u>Justification of decision:</u>	<u>Impact/Advantages:</u>
Question 1 in the questionnaire indicated around 65% of students don't know who their rep is and some only find out 'once they have a problem'. Question 3 showed that less than 1/3 of students use the service and this may be linked to the results of Question 1. Question 12 & 13 raised comments such as 'everyone should know who the reps are' and 'how to contact them'.	Once students know who their reps are and how to contact them a lot of other issues will slowly start to solve themselves. This objective is one of the most important objectives because other objectives such as ones reliant on flow of communication can essentially not be solved if students don't know who their reps are.
Priority: 1 – Critical	
<b>2) Designing a standardised process to become a student rep and how it works</b>	
<u>Justification of decision:</u>	<u>Impact/Advantages:</u>
Question 6 in the questionnaire indicated around 2/3 <sup>rd</sup> s of students don't know how student reps are elected. It opened up a whole host of comments regarding the process 'needs advertising better' and 'is quite unclear' and 'very ineffective'. Comments were also made about a student reps suitability and if they 'perform their role correctly' if just elected as rep with no process which is essentially just 'self-selected' and 'not great'. This objective will also aid several of the other objectives and answers comments such as those left in Question 13 'The student rep service was briefly mentioned in class...'	This is one of the important steps in promoting that the student rep service actually exists. A main impact of this is that more students may apply to become a rep and better/passionate candidates can be chosen who will significantly impact the student community for the better e.g. providing students with a voice and high issue solving rates. Overall a clear process may completely change the numbers of applicants who apply which will ultimately impact several objectives such as how promoted communication is; and the focus of engagement levels from students.
Priority: 2 – Important	
<b>3) Increasing ways and that students can voice their concerns and use the service (providing higher engagement with students)</b>	

<b>3.1) Create an anonymous method that students can use if they wish</b>	
<u>Justification of decision:</u>	<u>Impact/Advantages:</u>
<p>In question 11.1, 26% of students said the service needs to improve on 'helping students have a voice'.</p> <p>Question 7 showed that creating an anonymous method that can be used as calculated from the questionnaire will allow 1/3 more of the students in the school to use the service making this quite an important objective.</p>	<p>A higher level of engagement will help identify more issues throughout the year and thus create overall better student satisfaction e.g. on the National Student Survey or just in general about having student reps. As well as this if more people can voice their concerns it will help to highlight important problems much quicker to the university as opposed to just 1 or 2 people having a problem. A 1/3 more students may participate if there was anonymity.</p>
Priority: 2 – Important	
<b>4) Provide a communication method to highlighting current issues and problems so students with the same problem can voice their opinions or be kept up to date with the progress</b>	
<u>Justification of decision:</u>	<u>Impact/Advantages:</u>
<p>The results of question 11.1 indicated 48% of respondents felt reps 'need to collect as many student views as possible' when looking at issues and 51% thought they need to 'communicate problems/issues' across to students, while 63% said they should 'create awareness of issues'. Question 12 also contained comments such as 'Other issues people have raised so if you have an opinion you can give it'</p>	<p>Individuals that think a problem is solely their own may realise it is a wider issue and feel more confident voicing their opinion. Highlighting current issues will show students that their opinions are valued and they will be able to see when they may potentially be solved as well as what is on the agenda. This is quite important but not as important as providing a means to voice your concern initially (objective 3) and also communicating results (objective 5)</p>
Priority: 3 – Valuable	
<b>5) Ways to promote and communicate what changes/solutions have happened because of the student rep service other than Facebook</b>	
<u>Justification of decision:</u>	<u>Impact/Advantages:</u>
<p>Several questions linked into the importance of communicating changes, in question 9, 88.9% of students said they didn't know how to find out what changes have happened because of student reps. In Question 9.1 88.9% would just be happy with 'email' as a way to communicate changes. In question 11.1, 37% thought improvement into 'solving issues' was needed and this is most likely linked to the fact that student's don't know what actually gets solved. Question 12 has a series of comments such as 'What's actually happening. What's been fixed by the reps' and 'when issues have been resolved and what has been done</p>	<p>Communication changes/solutions is essentially a backbone component of having a student rep service – if people don't think change ever happens then people become less inclined to raise issues in the first place or lose faith and the use of the service/system slowly diminishes. By promoting changes on other platforms as seen in the results of the questionnaire will allow 50% more students to realise the impact the student reps actually have.</p>

to rectify the issue' which links to comments such as 'assurance the rep has done their job'. At least 50% of the respondents mentioned something related to lack of information regarding solutions in question 12.	
Priority: 1 – Critical	
<b>6) Create overall structure to the Student Rep system and general understanding by putting into place standardised processes (best practices)</b>	
<u>Justification of decision:</u>	<u>Impact/Advantages:</u>
Question 13 comments indicate 'there is no real system' and in Question 12 students mentioned they want to know 'how things are carried out'. In question 6.1 students mention the 'process is quite unclear' and 'it's not great'.	This will help provide overall clarity and understanding of different components within the Student Rep Service – it will recommend a set of standards to use for different activities which will reduce the confusion across different year groups. This is something that will aid the student rep service across a number of different issues.
Priority: 3 – Valuable	
<b>7) Overall minor improvements that as a whole will add up to making the service and experience for students better</b>	
<u>Justification of decision:</u>	<u>Impact/Advantages:</u>
Question 13 comments indicate 'there are general improvements to be made' and 'it needs a lot of improvement especially when interacting with students'. In question 5, nearly 50% of students voted under a score of 5 for how good the rep service was (with 1 being terrible and 10 being excellent). In question 4, 67% of students said the service needs improving.	This will impact future ratings of the service (hopefully scoring higher for excellence in the future as opposed to terrible) – a lot of the smaller minor improvements will aid and impact a lot of the above objectives as well as improve the overall perception of how 'valuable' using the service can be/is.
Priority: 3 – Valuable	

### **Action plan:**

To address the main objectives above (see page 13) it was decided to conduct a number of activities in order to investigate possible solutions and identify appropriate recommendations. A Knowledge Management exercise will still be conducted because this is critical to finding out the information and communication exchange that needs to happen as well as other aspects. The student profiles (user stories) will still be important when looking at the needs of different types of students e.g. international students & mature students etc. Also other needs such as the need for anonymity (see in the results of the questionnaire). Soft Systems Methodology: Root Definition and Conceptual Modelling (Influence Diagram) will still form an essential element of this project due to the increasing complexity of all the different aspects involved – this will aid seeing the 'bigger picture' within the project itself e.g. help people understand and know what is going on.

Additional activities I plan to encompass into the project now include:

- Observation of the Student Staff Panel
- This will help me find out what kinds of problems go to the panel and how solutions are formed – this will assist me with objective 4 (ways to highlight current issues & updates), objective 5 (solutions put in place) and objective 7 (overall minor improvements).
- Cardiff University Based Research:
- By looking at other schools around the university and also what Computer Science & Informatics already have in place it will help me identify potential ideas, solutions and resources that are available to utilize – this will help me with objectives 1, 3, 4, 5 and 7
- Cardiff Universities Website:
- This will help me find out what information and resources are available for students e.g. can they locate their student rep on here? – Although this will help me generally with all the objectives it does not significantly impact any objective directly.
- Student Rep Procedures across Universities
- This will help me design and compare processes that can be used to elect student reps and create a standardised (best practice) method – this will help with objectives 2 and 6.

### **Initial Questionnaire – Student Rep Service (Staff Questionnaire):**

The initial staff questionnaire has been split into two sections: each section contains relevant questions depending on if the member of staff is part of the Student Staff Panel or not. Therefore when analysing the results I will treat it as two separate initial questionnaires. The questionnaire with members on the panel will help to identify key information regarding the data the panel needs. It will aid the completion of Knowledge Management Review as well as assisting one of the original secondary objectives which was to find a solution regarding Student Staff Panel timetabling issues. The other section of the questionnaire for non-Student Staff Panel staff will aid me in finding out the knowledge and information they wish to know and give insight to how interested staff are in the Student Rep Service as a whole.

### **Demographics:**

As part of this questionnaire I have safeguarded my input by finding out if the respondent is on the Student Staff Panel or not as this greatly impacts how staff members learn about issues/problems. As well as this, only members of the panel will know about panel specific topics.

Analysis of demographics – A total of 2 staff took the Student Staff Panel Questionnaire (section A) and a total of 11 staff who are not members of the panel took the questionnaire (section B). Providing a good range of opinion of staff not on the panel but didn't provide as much of a good insight of those sitting on the panel – however two staff members who took the section B questionnaire were previous members of the student staff panel and this helps to be better even out the numbers.



## **Results – Section (A) Panel Members:**

\*Full Questions and Results/Answers may be found in [Staff Initial Questionnaire Results.pdf](#) in Other Files submitted with this project\*

Question	Results	Findings
<b>Perquisite Question:</b> Are you currently on the Student Staff Panel?	➤ Yes – 2	
<b>1)</b> Do you think the student rep staff meetings are frequent enough?	➤ Yes – 1 ➤ No – ➤ No, but should have year group meetings not more SSP - 1	Due to only having two participants it is hard to analyse these results especially when the two respondents appear to have conflicting views. However they both agree on question 3.1 – knowing the main issues beforehand
<b>2)</b> Are you given enough notice before a student rep staff meeting?	➤ Yes – 1 ➤ No – 1	
<b>3)</b> Do you know what is on the agenda before attending the meeting <b>3.1.</b> If NO – would you like to know the main issues before hand	➤ Yes – 1 ➤ No – ➤ Sometimes - 1  <b>3.1.</b> ➤ Yes – 2 ➤ No -	
<b>4)</b> Do you feel that the meetings (content wise) are well organised	➤ Yes – 1 ➤ No - 1	'could be more efficient'
<b>5)</b> How do you feel about the length a meeting goes on for?	➤ Good Amount of Time - 1 ➤ Too Long – 1 ➤ Not Bad – ➤ Other -	
<b>6)</b> How do you think changes that happen could be shown to the students?	*For exact comments see <a href="#">Staff Initial Questionnaire Results.pdf</a> *  'designated webpage' 'posters' 'replies individually to people who make suggestions' 'summary of meeting minutes'	Both respondents came up with good ideas of showing changes to the students which also suggests they both agree students should know what happens because of the panel.
<b>7)</b> Do you ever receive 'good' news in the meeting e.g. things that are working well <b>7.1.</b> If NO – would you like to hear about good things in the meeting?	➤ Yes – ➤ No – 2  <b>7.1.</b> ➤ Yes - 1 ➤ No – doesn't matter ➤ No – would create longer meetings - 1 ➤ Other -	Both responders say they never receive any good news however one wants to know the outcomes and the other is worried about creating longer meetings

8) Other Comments	*For exact comments see <a href="#">Staff Initial Questionnaire Results.pdf</a> *	
9) Contact details if interested in further project participation.		

### **Summary and Recommendations of Findings (Section A):**

Due to having limited responders it is hard to draw proper conclusions from the information collected and this is something that should be re-visited at a later stage to obtain more questionnaire participants. However it is clear from the questionnaire results that both staff members would like to know main issues before hand and also provide a means to inform students about changes and decisions made by the student staff panel. Both staff members have concerns about the length of the time of the meeting.

### **Results – Section (B) Non Panel Members:**

\*Full Questions and Results/Answers may be found in [Staff Initial Questionnaire Results.pdf](#) in Other Files submitted with this project\*

Question	Results	Findings
<b>Perquisite Question:</b> Are you currently on the Student Staff Panel?	➤ No – 11	<u>Note:</u> 2 responders have links to the panel. One appears sometimes as a 'guest' and the other was previously chair of the panel.
1) Are you aware there is a student rep staff panel?	➤ Yes – 10 ➤ No - 1	Staff members are generally aware there is a panel
2) Do you find out the results/issues which arise after a student rep staff meeting? 2.1. If YES – how do you find this out?	➤ Yes – 6 ➤ No – 2 ➤ Not sure - 1 2.1. ➤ Word of Mouth - 2 ➤ Email - 3 ➤ Other: - 1 (minutes) - 1 my boss -1 (I ask someone) - 1 (If they concern me)	Half the staff will find out about the results/issues after a student staff panel. This usually required them to ask about it or they followed up only if it concerned them.
3) Would you be interested in receiving the minutes of the student rep staff meeting?	➤ Yes – 8 ➤ No - 2	The majority of staff would be interested in receiving the minutes.
4) Other comments	'I receive minutes sometimes'	The comments here appear to reiterate that

	'a archive system could be useful to review previous meetings' 'I'm not sure if I hear all the issues that concern me, I get some by email' 'filter out relevant ones to me'	staff would like a copy of the minutes or a place that contains an archive so they can look it up in their own time.
5) Contact details if interested in further project participation.	<a href="mailto:jonesa@cf.ac.uk">jonesa@cf.ac.uk</a> <a href="mailto:turnerL9@cardiff.ac.uk">turnerL9@cardiff.ac.uk</a> <a href="mailto:davejr@cardiff.ac.uk">davejr@cardiff.ac.uk</a> <a href="mailto:allensm@cardiff.ac.uk">allensm@cardiff.ac.uk</a> <a href="mailto:shaoj@cardiff.ac.uk">shaoj@cardiff.ac.uk</a>	

### **Summary & Recommendations of Findings (Section B):**

Main findings from this questionnaire are that staff know the panel exists but would like to know the overall results/findings after the panel which is a similar request/need of the students. A condensed format of the minutes maybe able to provide a solution to both the staff and the students that can be emailed out within a week of the SSP meeting. The SSP minutes currently go to the Board of Studies, however there is only one Board of Studies each semester so this often means staff will not see or receive the minutes for several months.

An interesting comment suggested having an 'archive system' while another comment suggested being able to 'filter out relevant ones to me' which is a potential idea that could be used in the future to further this project. One staff member wrote that we should 'replace [whole] process by online system where ANY student or staff can submit suggestions/ requests to be considered once a week – there is no need for reps – have a democratic system' and I think this comment has stemmed from the fact that they do not know how to engage with the student reps and so they feel that only reps can raise problems which is completely the opposite of the student rep system. This links to objectives 1 and 3 which would allow more ways for staff and students to raise issues and problems to student reps.

## **Why is Knowledge Management important in solving/identifying issues within the Student Rep Process?:**

A Knowledge Management exercise is critical to finding out the information and communication exchange that needs to happen between all the involved stakeholders (students, student reps, staff panel, student rep coordinator and everyone). It will identify key areas that have not been considered as well as shape potential communication processes that need to happen in order to have an effective student rep system.

## **What is Knowledge Management?**

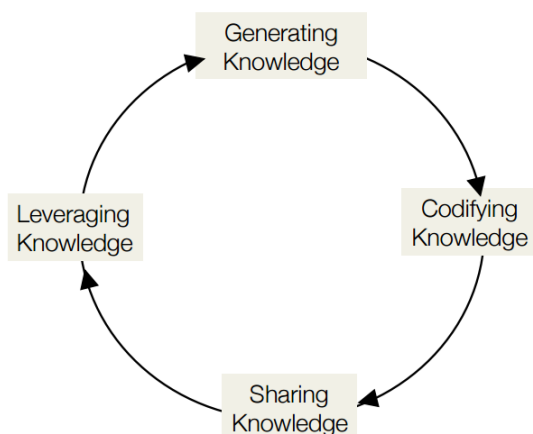
Knowledge Management, (KM) is a concept and a term that appeared approximately in the 1990s. Davenport (1994) offered the still widely quoted definition: "Knowledge management is the process of capturing, distributing, and effectively using knowledge."

The Gartner Group created a second definition of KM, which is perhaps the most frequently cited one (Duhon, 1998): "Knowledge management is a discipline that promotes an integrated approach to identifying, capturing, evaluating, retrieving, and sharing all of an enterprise's information assets. These assets may include databases, documents, policies, procedures, and previously un-captured expertise and experience in individual workers."

There are 3 types of knowledge:

- **Explicit:** this is the knowledge that is written down and is accessible in one way or another.
- **Implicit:** this is knowledge that isn't written down yet but is largely procedural and not dependent on an individual's context.
- **Tacit:** the knowledge in our heads that is made up from experience and personal contexts. It's not written down and is hard to articulate.

KM supports and coordinates the generation, codification, sharing and leveraging (application of individual knowledge) in value creation processes. There are 4 main life-cycle stages of KM (Alun Preece, 2015):



➤ **Generation** – Finding / acquiring or gaining new knowledge

➤ **Codification** – Making the knowledge accessible to those who need it e.g. case based reasoning system

➤ **Sharing** – providing means for people to share knowledge e.g. networking, communities of practice etc.

➤ **Leveraging** – using the knowledge and skills gained to add value or learn new things

(once learning begins then the cycle starts and 'generation' happens)

## **How will I conduct the KM review?**

First a full review of all the involved stakeholders and their data, information and knowledge needs will be identified. Identification will happen through a variety of methods such as results gathered in questionnaires, general knowledge of the student rep system, conversations with stakeholders and looking at current documents and procedures. This forms the key stages of identifying and capturing of KM as listed in the definition of KM by the Gartner Group above. After initial identification, a table will be used to effectively capture all the information obtained into 3 types (data, information and knowledge); knowledge will then be analysed and evaluated to whether it forms Explicit Knowledge or Tacit Knowledge. Implicit knowledge is not used in this evaluation because implicit knowledge can be turned into Explicit Knowledge by means of Codification whereas Tacit cannot be, or is next to impossible to codify e.g. riding a bicycle (although this can be documented and explained it is not possible to 'ride a bike' from following documentation alone). The purpose of identifying the knowledge as Explicit or Tacit will classify what knowledge can be documented (codified) and what knowledge may need to be learnt through practice, demonstrations and over time. For example a new student rep may not gain some of the tacit knowledge until a few months into the role whereas a re-elected student rep will already know this knowledge. This knowledge can be utilised to teach new reps in a similar way individuals learn when undertaking an apprenticeship. Secondly a review into how people access the data/information/knowledge they need will be conducted which will identify knowledge that is already 'codified' and then provide ideas for how knowledge can be 'shared' and finally 'leveraged' which may cause further knowledge 'generation' and completes the KM lifecycle.

## **Knowledge Management Review of the Student Rep System:**

	<b>Data</b>	<b>Information</b>	<b>Knowledge</b>
<b>Everyone</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Number of solved problems per term / year</li><li>• Number of outstanding problems</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Key Meeting Dates</li><li>• Who the Student Reps are</li><li>• How an issue has been solved</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How the Student Rep service works (E)</li><li>• How to best contact a student rep (T)</li><li>• How to raise an issue (E)</li><li>• How to use any new student rep system / platform recommended (T)</li></ul>
<b>Student Reps</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Job Description</li><li>• Who Year Tutors/ Lecturers are</li><li>• Who academic rep is</li><li>• Details regarding any issues</li><li>• Methods to collect student problems/issues</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How to engage students / ensure people participate (T)</li><li>• What is a priority issue(T)</li><li>• How to highlight a priority issue (E)</li><li>• Communication Methods (T)</li></ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current student issues and problems (<b>T</b>)</li> </ul>
<b>Students</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How many reps there are</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to become a student rep (process)</li> <li>• How a student rep is selected</li> <li>• Advantages / Disadvantages of becoming a rep</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is a student rep workload /activities involved are like (<b>E</b>)</li> </ul>
<b>Staff Panel</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General data e.g.) rooms in the school, number of students in a class</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of students a problem effects</li> <li>• Current issues</li> <li>• Priority items/issues</li> <li>• Positive feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ways to escalate issues (<b>E</b>)</li> <li>• How to resolve problems arisen (<b>T</b>)</li> </ul>
<b>Student Rep-Coordinator</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General statistic regarding overall satisfaction of student rep service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student communication preferences</li> <li>• Student rep communication preferences</li> <li>• Staff (panel and non-panel) communication preferences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Correct channels that can be used to escalate priority issues ahead of SSP meeting (<b>E</b>)</li> <li>• How to engage the student cohort to participate (<b>T</b>)</li> <li>• How to best promote the student reps to students (<b>T</b>)</li> </ul>

### **Review - How do people access the data/information/knowledge they need?**

This will help to identify how stakeholders currently access the information that they need to perform their role in the student rep service or to engage with the service. It will also identify if any information and communication technologies currently play a role in any of these processes and how best we can utilise technology in the future to aid the service through knowledge management.

- Students – find out about the student rep service through a talk in the first lecture at the start of the year. Sometimes an email is sent out about student reps at the start of the year. General information by contacting/reaching out to the student reps. Through an unofficial Facebook group if one is set up. On the student union website under student reps – “I am a student”.
- Student Reps – find out about the student rep service through a talk in the first lecture at the start of the year and then if selected other information/knowledge from the student rep coordinator and student union training session. Other information is also on the student union website under student reps – “I am a rep”.
- Staff Panel – nothing, just an email of when to turn up
- Student Rep Coordinator – training with the university at the start of the year and some presentation slides

- Everyone – has access to the student union student rep website which provides general details on the student rep system within Cardiff University.

Technologies that could be used to help codify & share knowledge include:

- Student Intranet
- Facebook
- Cardiff University / Student Union Website
- Calendar event scheduler
- Learning Central
- Email
- Mobiles – text
- Notice boards
- YouTube (videos)

Some of these technologies will be useful for different types of information and knowledge sharing, for example content placed on the Student Intranet, Cardiff University/Student Union Website and Learning Central will appear to be more official than something posted on Facebook. However Facebook and Mobiles (texting) has the potential divulge information to students very quickly but may not be seen/include all students whereas an email to their university email would. YouTube (videos) would be the most useful when demonstrating tutorial type activities or trying to engage students in the content of the information. All these different types of technologies and their advantages and disadvantages for information/knowledge sharing will have to be considered when proposing viable solutions.

### **Overall KM Recommendations & Conclusion:**

A OODA loop will help gather all the collected information, analyse the information and help to determine the course of action which will provide a basis for the recommendations from the Knowledge Management Review. The OODA Loop which outlines a four-point decision loop that supports quick, effective and proactive decision-making has the following stages.

- 1) Observe – collect current information from as many sources as practically possible
- 2) Orient – analyse this information and use it to update current reality
- 3) Decide – determine a course of action
- 4) Act – follow through on your decision

Observing and orienting play a critical part in a successful decision – if these steps are flawed there will be a flawed decision and a flawed subsequent action.

Step 1 (Observe) and Step 2 (Orient) has been completed via the collection of questionnaires and also the knowledge management review itself which will aid step 3 (Decide). The knowledge management review will be used to determine the course of action by combining the results later with Soft Systems Methodology.

Possible Issues and Problems which may arise are:

- An information overload (particular for new reps or students starting in year 1 at university)

- A lack of time for sharing knowledge obtained (busy schedules)
- An inability to use the knowledge efficiently (e.g. if other core skills required are not in place e.g. confidence)
- Human is a cause for failure (insufficient communication and lack of training)



## **Student Staff Panel (SSP) Meeting Review:**

Observation of the Student Staff Panel will identify how a key element of the student rep service works. It will allow insight into how problems go to the panel and how solutions are formed which will help with objectives 4 (ways to highlight current issues & updates), objective 5 (solutions put in place) and objective 7 (overall minor improvements). Observing the panel will help to identify ways that the solutions and changes that happen can be passed onto students and staff which was identified as a critical objective and was highly mentioned in both staff and student questionnaires. A comparison of the way the SSP meeting is conducted will be compared to methodologies used for effective meetings and provide recommendations that could overall improve the standard of the SSP meetings.

### **Research:**

#### **Best Practice of conducting Meetings:**

Taken and condensed from the University of Wisconsin-Madison Office of Human Resource Development (Academic Leadership Support) (2014):

<b>Best Practice</b>	<b>Description</b>
Clarifying aims and purposes	These are the key decisions that must be made or actions that must occur at the meeting.
Creating an actionable agenda	Each item on the agenda should begin with an action word (verb). These items should frame the expectations of attendees. (Decide, Review Discuss, Select, Finish)
Allotting time for topics	Allot time for meeting topics based on their significance. Agenda items are like work in general - they will expand to fill whatever time is available.
Getting started on time	Reduce waste of professional time
Ending on time	Manage the meeting time and deal with priority items first
Agree on ground rules	Each group creates its own ground rules and it is the chair's or facilitator's role to remind the group.
Assigning key meeting roles	Most meetings need people playing <u>four roles</u> : 1-Leader convenes the meeting 2-Facilitator keeps discussion and decision-making process moving along 3-Recorder takes notes on paper, laptop or on flip charts 4-Timekeeper reminds leader when time almost up for a given item.
Creating a visual record	A visual record is an outline of key discussion items or alternative solutions which are placed on a flip chart or projected from a laptop for all to see. This visual representation helps people remember what has been posed and enables the group's attention to focus on the items, rather than the person who suggested them. The visual record also discourages rehashing.
Evaluating meetings periodically	The leader's perception of how a meeting has gone can be quite different than participants' experiences of the same meeting. Evaluating how meetings are going,

	discussing results together, and making improvements continuously.
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### Group Decision Making:

The student staff panel can be viewed as a collection of two or more individuals, interacting and interdependent, who have come together to achieve a common objective(s) which is a definition of a group. When looking at the student staff panel it will be important to identify if it is improving the quality of decisions or detracting from effective decision making by answering the following questions:

- How the group processes affect decision making?
- What can be done to improve effective decision making in the group?
- How to avoid any dysfunctions that can stem from group decision making?

There are 5 benefits of group decision making and this will be compared with the meeting observations to see which benefits are attained from the student staff panel. The benefits are: Legitimacy (taking into account the feelings of others and involvement in the decision making process), Quality of decisions (wider range of experience, ability and expertise), Novelty (generation of ideas /brainstorming), Where there is a shortage of information (greater sharing of information, easier to access complete information) and Morale (social satisfaction and interaction with others – personal development).

The dangers of the over-cohesive group in decision making is highlighted in the concept of groupthink developed by Janis (1982) and includes the following symptoms (taken from Natasha Edwards 2015 week 10 lecture):

- The illusion of invulnerability – The group feels, unrealistically, free from any external threat. It overestimates its ability to succeed against high odds and extraordinary risks.
- Collective rationalisation – The group is not likely to spot any snags. When it is suggested that plans are going wrong it spends a lot of time thinking of rationalisations for failure and ways to discount warnings.
- Belief in the inherent morality of the group – In the process of maintaining a high level of conformity, the group develops a conviction that what it is doing is correct, with no questions of its decisions.
- Stereotypes of outgroups – Victims of groupthink hold biased or simple stereotypes of competing groups.
- Direct pressure on dissenters – When there are signs of non-conformity in the group, strong pressure given to bring members back in line
- Mindguards – mindguards provide some sort of intellectual protection for group members. Mindguards may, for example, discourage people from talking to others with different viewpoints or choose to filter information that people might disagree with.
- Self-censorship – The group pressures people not to express any misgivings they might have about a particular decision.
- Illusion of unanimity – Stemming from self-censorship and the operation of mindguards, the victims of groupthink share the illusion of group unanimity. Silence is taken as strong assent and lukewarm approval as genuine agreement.

## **Meeting Observations:**

Date attended 10/02/16 16:00-18:00

Meeting started promptly.

A mix of staff from all areas attend the meeting - some representatives include library, school receptionist, final year project coordinator, student rep coordinator, computer resources as well as lecturers from both software academy and computer science and informatics.

Order of meeting: introduction of attendees/apologies → short introduction of previous minutes → open discussion on issues/views following agenda topics in order → issues raised by individual year groups → very vague attempt for date at next week (see agenda [COMSC SSP Agenda 10 February .pdf](#) in Other Files attached with this project for full order of meetings)

### **Other meeting observations:**

- Some student reps don't participate as much, however they do have points to have but only talk when they are directly asked or mentioned – possible idea is to ask if anyone has anything else to add after each discussion or go around the table
- Student reps had sent out a survey link to collect anonymous feedback – they received over 15 results in 4 days since the survey was live compared to 0 before trialling this idea (this definitely suggests that higher engagement can be gained through anonymous participation)
- Agreement of when to have next meeting quite vague e.g. sometime in first week after Easter, I think this should be followed up initially with a poll of some sort for staff when the minutes etc. are emailed out – this way they can have a look at their calendar and try choose some suitable dates/times which can be reviewed again around 2 weeks before the proposed meeting.
- No representation given from students on placement year – essentially left out from any issues they may have

## **Student Staff Panel Review:**

This section will look at the SSP observations and identify possible issues / ideas for meeting improvement as well as comparing these to the best practices for meetings identified in the research.

<b>Problem</b>	<b>Change Needed</b>	<b>Meeting Improvement</b>
Dealing with smaller not larger issues  <u>Best Practice</u> - Allotting time for topics	<b>Priority Items</b> (highlighted ahead of meeting)	After main introductions & previous minutes, discussion of in-depth or important topics that staff can pre-prepare for by having a list of priority items emailed out a week before (this may be useful so that staff can raise concerns or issues they have thought of during the week or while looking into ways to fix it, alternatively they may have

		a solution in place by the meeting – thus allowing reps to feedback something positive to students after the meeting)
<p>Dealing with smaller not larger issues</p> <p><u>Best Practice</u> - Allotting time for topics</p>	<p><b>Reps to raise simpler issues ahead</b> (problems that can be solved by contacting year tutor or lecturer involved)</p>	<p>Some issues raised at the SSP do not require all staff members to be present, they are specific issues that only require a lecture or year tutor to be resolved (if reps are having difficulty raising the issue or need help, they can ask the rep coordinator to aid them notifying the relevant member of staff). This will help two things, one it will shorten the length of the meeting time &amp; two it will allow issues to be dealt with much sooner and not get built up e.g.) some computers not having python/java software installed</p>
<p>Length of meeting time</p> <p><u>Best Practice</u> - Allotting time for topics Assigning key meeting roles Creating an actionable agenda</p>	<p><b>Shorter Meeting Time</b> (~ 1h30 minutes tops, aiming for an hour)</p>	<p>As an observer it was clear that around the hour mark, people were a little bit less engaged, bored or restless. Upon discussing this with some student's at the end of the meeting, they too agreed that they feel it's slightly long and it's harder to pay attention to everything raised. Possibly solutions include having a time keeper, solving simpler issues ahead of time and having priority items staff can think about before attending. Creating an actionable agenda will focus participants on the action that needs to be completed and will aid reducing the meeting time.</p>
<p>Keeping members focused, on topic and sharing ideas</p> <p><u>Best Practice</u> - Creating a visual record</p>		<p>Creating a visual record (using a whiteboard or a presentation on screen) of each topic as it is discussed will provide a visual focus for the panel members instead of them looking around the room or focusing on the speaker instead of the topic or content at hand (reducing distractions and providing a focus point for attention).</p>

This section will look at the SSP observations and compare these to Group Decision Making principles:

There are 5 main reasons why using groups in decision making are effective and from the observations of the student staff panel it is clear that most of these are providing a benefit by having a group of participants.

- Legitimacy – the student staff panel definitely encompasses taking into account different perspectives and feelings by having different specialism of staff attending e.g. librarian as well as student reps on the panel although not every person always voices their opinion
- Quality of decisions – there is definitely a range of experience and expertise in the student staff panel group although maybe having the head of year present may speed up the development & results of issues quicker.
- Novelty – there is not much generation of ideas, once someone states a reasonable solution, often the group agree to move on without discussion of other viable ideas
- Where there is a shortage of information – having a large group definitely helps this aspect but often issues raised come un-prepared with evidence or statistics to the panel that may be useful
- Morale – morale of the group seems good and the small buffet is a bonus which provides a social aspect for informal discussion prior to the start of the meeting.

However some topics as identified in the review of best practices could be solved much quicker without having to go through this main student staff panel meeting. For example the pressures of time may not make the relatively lengthy process of group involvement appropriate and therefore smaller, shorter more regular meetings should maybe put in place to deal with these issues such as a year group student staff panel.

Looking at the symptoms of GroupThink it is clear that the student staff panel does face some of the GroupThink problems:

Symptom	Observation of SSP	Prevention Method
Illusion of group invulnerability	Does not effect SSP	Leader(s) encourages open express of doubt
Collective rationalisation	Does not effect SSP	Leader(s) accepts criticism of their opinions
Belief in the Inherent morality of the group	This can be seem sometimes occurring in the SSP, quieter students/staff may not want to say a different view or opinion to that of a staff member or someone seen to be more senior so instead remain quiet.	High-status members are the last to offer opinions therefore providing more opportunities for different ideas
Stereotypes of outgroups	Does not effect SSP	Solicit opinions of other groups
Direct pressure on dissenters	The SSP does not really have mindguards or direct pressure from dissenters but quieter students may be afraid to suggest a different opinion. This could be addressed by assigning a member to be devil's advocate and ask the difficult questions	
Mindguards		
Self-censorship	Get reactions of outsiders - <b>Students/staff want to know progress</b> (actions taken, issues discussed etc.). I think it would be very useful to do a less detailed / differently formatted account for students of what happened in the meeting, focusing on: -issues raised by reps/staff	

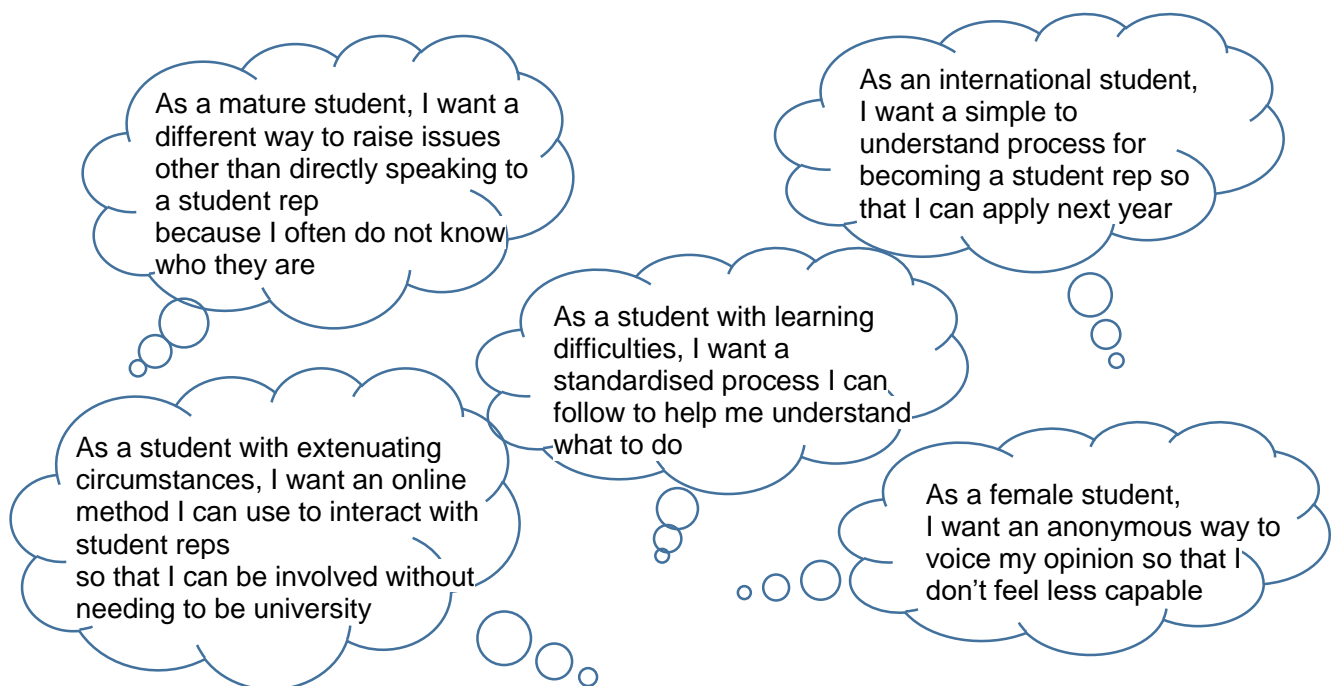
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- issues solved (maybe You said, We did format)</li> <li>- issues pending</li> </ul> <p>Then a way to feedback their feelings on what happened in the meeting e.g.) this idea is good/bad, you didn't raise x issue and general comments.</p> <p>Possibly if none of the student reps want to have this responsibility a new position can be created for content publishing to students (similar to the individual role of secretary or chairman) e.g.) creating a short newsletter / suitable format of minutes for students, creating the feedback survey for minutes, ensuring the website content is up to date.</p>	
Illusion of unanimity	There are silent participants - some student reps don't participate as much, however they do have points to have but only talk when they are directly asked or mentioned	Invite outsiders to join discussions periodically - – possible idea is to ask if anyone has anything else to add after each discussion or go around the table

Some of the more silent students or staff may be facing the 'Abilene Paradox'; this is where a group collectively decide on a course of action that is against the preferences of any individuals in the group – it involves a common breakdown of group communication, in which each member mistakenly believes that their own preferences are counter to the group's and therefore does not raise objections for example 'rocking the boat'.

## **Student Profile User Stories:**

The student profiles (user stories) is important when looking at the needs of different types of students e.g. international students & mature students etc. It will allow evaluating the recommendations and proposals given at the end of the project with what the student's wanted (user stories) given at the beginning – almost like requirements. Furthermore the different perspectives captured can be used in Soft System's Methodology Modelling to create a richer picture.

A user story is a short sentence which encapsulates a need or piece of functionality in the language of the end user. It sums up what the requirement or goal is and the reason for it. It also means requirements are presented in a user-centric way (Mears, 2015). The purpose of conducting user stories in this project is to identify the needs that different types of students may have e.g. mature students, international students etc. These have been collected from questionnaire comments and brief interviews of students on how they feel.



These user stories will be considered during Soft Systems Methodology modelling to ensure the conceptual model fully captures different perspectives and needs – looking at the bigger picture of the issues.

## **Cardiff University Based Research:**

The research conducted around Cardiff University will involve looking at other schools around the university and comparing and identifying student rep related content that they have used/put in place in comparison with the school of Computer Science & Informatics. This will help to identify potential ideas, solutions and possible resources that are available from the university that the school can utilise. As part of the research, where possible, an evaluation of the content will help gauge its effectiveness and the potential value it could add to the student rep system within Computer Science & Informatics. The research will help form solutions for objectives 1 (who the reps are/contact details), 3 (providing higher engagement with students), 4 (ways to highlight current issues & updates), objective 5 (solutions put in place) and objective 7 (overall minor improvements).

### **Engineering Building (Trevithick)**



Located by the engineering reception is an anonymous drop box for students to use as a method of feedback for their ideas/problems. Student reps have access to this box to collect any feedback given.

To find out more information regarding the drop box effectiveness, a student rep from the school of engineering was contacted (for email response see appendices). The rep said *'the drop box/suggestion box has worked, people are using it'* however the initial *'take up was slow to begin with but now it's used often'*. The rep believes *'the box is a good investment'* and it's *'another way for students to voice their opinions'*. The rep mentioned that it's *'something which in the past the [school] had but wasn't presented [well]'*.

This suggests that some promotion of the drop box will be needed if implemented into the school of Computer Science & Informatics but once students know the box is there and its purpose, it becomes a valuable asset to collecting student opinion, problems and views.

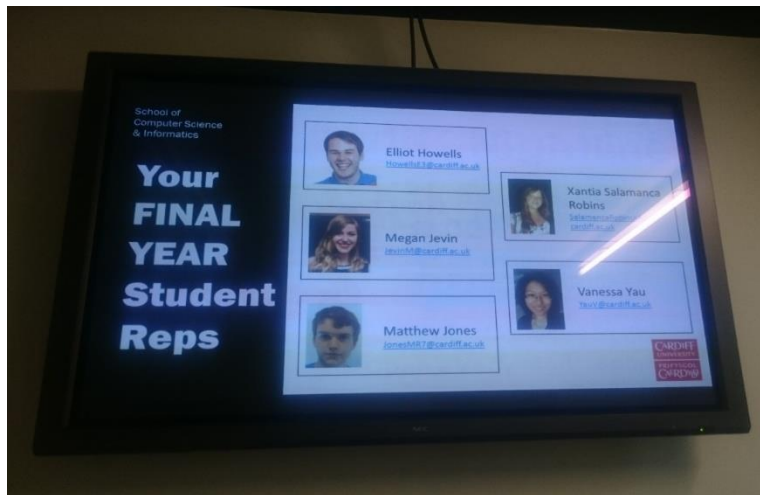
### **Modern Languages (Park Place)**

Located outside two large lecture rooms on 2<sup>nd</sup> floor are posters with the YOU SAID, WE DID format. The posters are located on a notice board which has among other things, opportunities for students such as gap year and competitions which seems to initially draw students towards the board. The posters purpose is to say what the problem was under 'you said' and what action or solution the school put in place under 'we did'.



## **Computer Science & Informatics (Trevithick)**

Located by the computer science & informatics reception is a TV screen, on part of its display loop there is a slide that says who the final year student reps are (picture, name, email). There is only a slide for final year student reps. Upon speaking to the student rep coordinator it was found that only final year reps had replied to requests for pictures.



Looking at the effectiveness of this, it does not identify who the reps are for all year groups within the school. Also due to the TV being on a loop, you may have to wait up to 5-10 minutes at a time for the student rep information. You may also never see the information due to not knowing it is part of the loop.

Furthermore the TV is often off, which means nothing is displayed at all. It doesn't really provide any information about how to actually find a rep. Collecting student rep pictures as part of the election process may help to speed up the process of creating notices of who the student reps are and general identification purposes.

## **Evaluation:**

The Drop Box is definitely something the school of Computer Science & Informatics should look into getting – it holds several benefits such as anonymity, simple access to collect feedback, takes seconds for a student to complete and does not require any technology. Once it is set up initially there is no additional costs and it is also a standardised method across the university and therefore there should be no issues in requesting or using the box.

The YOU SAID, WE DID posters seem a little of an outdated method and it's effectiveness heavily depends on its location – I would propose if a Drop Box was put into place that the posters are put somewhere around or near the box – this would also help indicate to students what the box's purpose is and help prove that changes can and do happen from the student rep service.

The TV screen is a nice idea but a notice board would probably be better due to the TV screen having a mixture of unrelated rep content and occasional being turned off. If there was budget for a TV screen solely for the use of student rep content then that changes things and it could prove effective especially in drawing student's attention and providing a wealth of knowledge about the service.

# Website Review of Cardiff University Student Rep Information

Conducting a website comparison will allow a bigger picture perspective into what information and resources is available for students online in Cardiff University e.g. can you find out who your rep is and how to contact them? It then maybe possible to integrate some of the findings into temporary solutions such as pointing students towards the website to find out information or seek help. This comparison will help generally with all the objectives but does not significantly impact any objective directly. Looking at other universities at a later stage will provide suggestions into the content that Cardiff University could improve on as well as potentially propose other ideas that universities use to engage students etc. These could also be implemented or tested here.

## Main Cardiff University Website

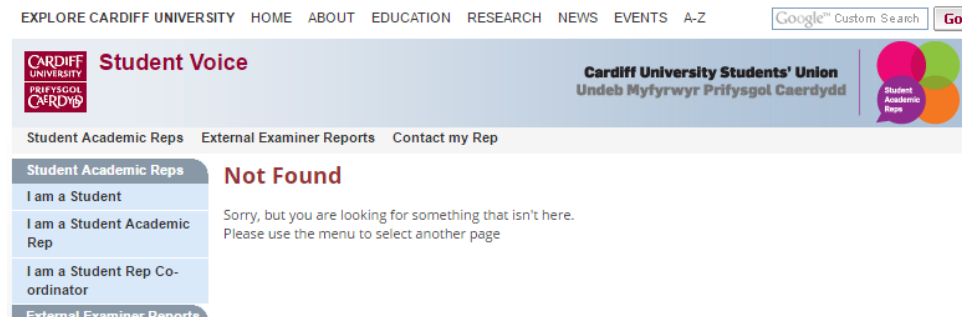
Link - <http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/studentvoice/about/students/>

Although at first it appears that there is relevant content on the university website – several links and buttons do not work. It looks like student reps are dead content. It is completely useless and ineffective as a means to promote the student rep service or provide any information to students. For example, clicking on 'Who is my rep?' provides an error message – see screenshot 2.

Screenshot 1:



Screenshot 2:



These error messages are also given when clicking on 'Calendar of Events' and 'When are reps elected'. Therefore not only cannot you not find out who your rep is, you can't find out when any key dates are and you also do not know how to become a rep or when the process starts.

When you click under 'Why is my feedback important?' this is displayed (screenshot 3). Indicating again that the student rep service may be inactive (2013 date stamp on page) and furthermore that feedback isn't important.



## Cardiff Student Union University Website

Link - <http://www.cardiffstudents.com/your-voice/academic-reps/become-a-rep/>

Upon initially conducting my research I did not know of the Cardiff Student Union Student Rep website and it was not until later in the project when meeting with Tom Spare from the student union that I uncovered that another website exists – this was also a surprise to the student rep coordinator.

This website is definitely more attractive (in terms of pictures, colour & font) and has useful content and videos – however it is not well advertised as people do not know it exists and the main Cardiff university website does not provide a link to it. The ease of navigation seems good and as temporary solutions it would be viable to direct students to this site for some information. However it does not contain any school specific information and you still cannot locate your student rep from it.



## **Student Rep Procedures across different Universities:**

As part of analysing the advantages and disadvantages of the current election of student representatives' procedure within the school of Computer Science and Informatics, it is important to conduct a review of how the process works at other schools within Cardiff University. As part of this review it would also be beneficial to look at what other universities were doing and what their process was. Where possible I have attempted to gather information from Computer Science related schools and as well as directly from current or previous student representatives of that school/course.

### **How I plan to use this information:**

- To analyse the process different schools across Cardiff University & other Universities use when electing student reps.
- To compare other methods with Computer Science & Informatics to understand what works well and what can be improved.
- To gather information and other ideas that can be incorporated into the new process designed for Computer Science & Informatics.

### **Procedure within Cardiff University**

<b>School</b>	<b>Procedure Used</b>	<b>Comments from source</b>
Computer Science & Informatics	*This is what is being looked into as part of this project* - there is no fixed procedure and it changes not only year on year but also by year group	
Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ A form is given out to the whole class at the start of the year</li><li>➤ Interested people need to fill in the form and have 2 people to sign for you (similar to 2 referees) before submitting the form</li><li>➤ A manifesto is written by each candidate</li><li>➤ Manifestos are sent by student services to all students in the year/school.</li><li>➤ Potential candidates are allocated time in a lecture to talk to students</li><li>➤ Students vote online</li><li>➤ Reps are chosen based on highest votes received</li></ul>	<p>Information collected from previous student rep – process 'tends to change a bit every year'</p> <p>Is unclear if voting online is done via email or by a poll</p> <p>A lot of students do not vote – 'I became a rep with only 9 votes'</p>
Engineering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Students are elected by staff or nominate themselves for student rep position</li><li>➤ Candidates write short paragraph about why they should do the job</li><li>➤ Students vote and reps are chosen based on highest votes received</li></ul>	<p>Information collected from current engineering student rep.</p> <p>They note that process only started in academic year 15/16 and that previously anybody rarely put themselves</p>

		forwards and thus got the role which is 'something that I hope never happens again'
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### **Other Universities (Computer Science related schools)**

<b>University - School</b>	<b>Procedure Used</b>	<b>Comments from sources used</b>
Brunel University – Computer Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Speech about reps are given in first lecture</li> <li>➤ People put up their hands</li> <li>➤ Interested candidates become reps</li> </ul>	'nobody wants to be reps here so anyone who is interested just starts being one'
Hertfordshire - ITMB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ During the initial/1st introduction meeting of the year which discusses general admin content, there is a talk from the program leader about student reps</li> <li>➤ During the same initial meeting the program leader asks if anyone is interested and if so to 'stand up'</li> <li>➤ The class are asked to make note of the people standing up to email two choices individually to the module leader by the end of the week</li> <li>➤ An email is sent out the following week stating which individual have been chosen</li> <li>➤ Chosen reps must then attend a mandatory student union training day and agree to attend a minimum of 3 discussion sessions by the end of the year</li> </ul>	<p>Information collected from previous student rep</p> <p>Alternatively a student may become a rep solely by being picked by the Program Leader (this tends to apply to previous reps / people known to be reliable)</p>
Manchester University – Computer Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Students are informed about student reps and how to apply</li> <li>➤ To apply/register you use the internal network which allows you to only register for the year and school you are in – then choose which specific degree e.g. straight comp science/ software engineering etc.</li> <li>➤ During the application you write 50-100 words about why you would make a good rep</li> </ul>	Information collected from previous student rep

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Once the deadline is reached, polling begins and everyone votes via the intranet</li> <li>➤ Students with the highest number of votes become reps</li> <li>➤ Any reps must attempt to meet every Wednesday and discuss any issues – there is also a board in the Comp Science building with all the reps and their email addresses for students to reach out to</li> </ul>	
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### **Other Universities (other schools)**

<b>University - School</b>	<b>Procedure Used</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Kent University - Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Apply to or be nominated by Kent Union to become a course rep.</li> <li>➤ Online polls are sent out via email where you can vote from the list of potential reps</li> </ul>	Generally unsure about overall procedure – steps mentioned are the steps source was sure about
South Bank – Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Class discusses who wants to be rep in a lecture in the first or second week</li> <li>➤ Anyone interested volunteers</li> <li>➤ Reps are mutually agreed in same lecture (up to 4 reps chosen)</li> </ul>	Usually those chosen with higher friend base – due to no time to think about any choices and voting can be seen by the whole class

### **Conclusion of findings & recommendations:**

Lots of universities have some similar parts of the student rep election process which is generally that all students are informed about how to become a student rep the process involved at the start of the academic year (usually in the first lecture); followed by interested candidates nominating or volunteering themselves. The process varies in length depending on the university but ultimately ends in a vote where the highest scoring candidates become student rep.

One of the main problems that a lot of the universities share is getting students initially interested in becoming a student rep. The Law school in Cardiff University appears to solve this problem by making quite a rigorous process that provides a 'challenge' to the student and almost becomes an 'honour' to be elected or chosen as a rep – benefits of this may be that it is more credible on a CV or a discussion in a job interview. It thus becomes a way to show an 'achievement' whilst at university as well as offering a particular means to differentiate yourself between other law students in a very competitive professional field. It is understood the Business School within Cardiff University practices a similar method which is generally promoting the benefits to the student job wise e.g. a way to demonstrate 'business

leadership' etc. on their resume where potentially references can be obtained via the university for their efforts as student rep. Manchester University, although having a fairly long process, attempt to increase participation by simplifying how to go through the entire process. This is done by putting everything apart from the initial briefing online – by having the whole application and voting process online and embedded into the intranet it is clear, simple and easy for students to follow and apply.

Some interesting ideas that could be implemented into the school of Computer Science & Informatics should include a way of highlighting benefits to students regarding becoming a rep to increase student participation – although I do not think it is a good idea to make a heavily rigorous process such as the Law school do as it may end up putting students off – especially if they are shy. I think it would be beneficial to do something similar to the Business School and perhaps enable as much of the process as possible (like Manchester) to be online. After all, this is the school of Computer Science & Informatics.

As mentioned above, a process like the Law school is too rigorous. However there does need to be more structure in the election process and potential ideas may be adding a short 50-100 word manifesto so students can find ways to differentiate between candidates or a short 1-2 minute presentation so students can see who the potential reps are while also giving the candidates an opportunity to express why they're best suited to the role. It will be important to include some steps and a process to ensure candidates are actually interested in the role but equally not too many steps that the whole process becomes too long and candidates drop out. Getting the balance right will be essential to the election process being successful.

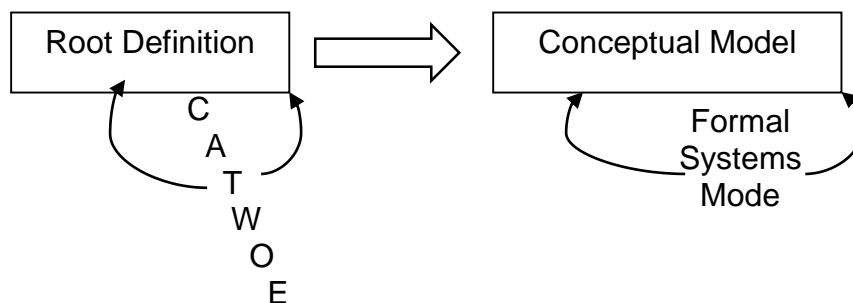


## Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) Modelling:

An SSM model will create insight into the 'bigger picture – different points of views' in a complex situation which will identify and express problems which will help to confirm that the proposed solutions, recommendations and design accomplishes the main objectives. An SSM model is "A simplified description or conception of a system, or a process, which is put forward as a basis for calculations, predictions or further investigation" (James Cowley, 2013).

There are two main methods of SSM by Peter Checkland [1999] and Brian Wilson [2001]. Checkland and Wilson developed a set of tools to help users carry out the steps which are:

- Rich Picture
- Conceptual Model
- CATWOE
- Formal Systems Model



## Methodology & Problem Solving:

Brian Wilson (2001) states 'The degree of variety in real-world problems is enormous, but it is useful to see them as lying within a spectrum which extends from 'hard' to 'soft'. This can be defined as *'the degrees of agreement about what the problem is'* among the particular population of individuals to whom 'the problem' is of concern. A 'hard' problem is that which the specification or requirements are given, a 'soft' problem is particularly if the needs as specified by the potential users are problematic and potentially unknown.

Due to the requirements of this project being unknown by the student rep coordinator, other than that she is aware that improvement is needed and students want more support I will be classing this as a 'soft' problem (both 'what to do' as well as 'how to do it' is problematic thus SSM has to start by defining, not a problem but a situation that is problematic and includes the following 7 stages of SSM:

1. Define the situation that is problematic
2. Express & research the situation
3. Select the concepts that may be relevant
4. Build conceptual models of the systems named in the root definitions
5. Use conceptual model to explore the situation
6. Define possible changes which are both possible and feasible
7. Take action to improve the situation



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graph TD; 1((1. Take Action)) --> 2((2. Find out about the situation)); 2 --> 4((4. Express the situation)); 4 --> 6((6. Define root definition relevant to the situation)); 6 --> 7((7. Develop Conceptual Models)); 7 --> 5((5. Compare)); 5 --> 3((3. Define changes  
-Desirable  
-Feasible)); 3 --> 1; 7 -- Iterate --> 4;
```

1. Take Action

2. Find out about the situation

3. Define changes  
-Desirable  
-Feasible

4. Express the situation

5. Compare

6. Define root definition relevant to the situation

7. Develop Conceptual Models

Real World

Systems Thinking about the real world

Iterate

### Root Definition:

C: The 'customers' of the system (system beneficiaries)  
A: The 'actors' who will carry out the activities envisaged  
T: The 'transformational process'. How the system converts inputs to outputs  
W: Weltanschauung or 'World View' – the perspective from which the root definition is formed  
O: The 'owner' the person who commissioned and has sufficient formal power over the system  
E: The 'environmental constraints' e.g. regulations, financial constraints, resources etc.

Upon conducting a CATWOE Analysis it is clear this project has two different main purposes. The first encompasses objectives 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and the second aids objective 2.

<b>CATWOE Analysis:</b>	
<b>Client</b>	Students
<b>Actors</b>	Student Reps & Student Rep Coordinator
<b>Transformation</b>	To provide students/staff a way to effectively engage with student reps
<b>Worldview</b>	By providing channels to raise problems and find solutions through standardised processes, additional services and best practice
<b>Owner</b>	Student Rep Coordinator
<b>Environment</b>	Time limitations (stakeholders), Resource limitations, Budget limitations, Knowledge Limitations/Experience (new student reps)

Root Definition: The Student Rep System is a Student Rep Coordinator owned system to provide students/staff a way to effectively engage with student reps by By providing channels to raise problems and find solutions through standardised processes, additional services and best practice given the constraints of time, resource, budget and knowledge in order to achieve x (increased satisfaction and solutions) for students.

<b>CATWOE Analysis:</b>	
<b>Client</b>	Students
<b>Actors</b>	Student Rep Coordinator
<b>Transformation</b>	By informing and attracting students to become reps
<b>Worldview</b>	Improving and designing a student rep election process for students
<b>Owner</b>	Student Rep Coordinator
<b>Environment</b>	Time limitation (deadlines), Budget Limitations

Root Definition: The Student Rep System is a Student Rep Coordinator owned system to attract students to become reps by the Student Rep Coordinator by improving and designing a student rep election process for students given the constraints of time and budget in order to achieve x(an effective student rep system) for students.

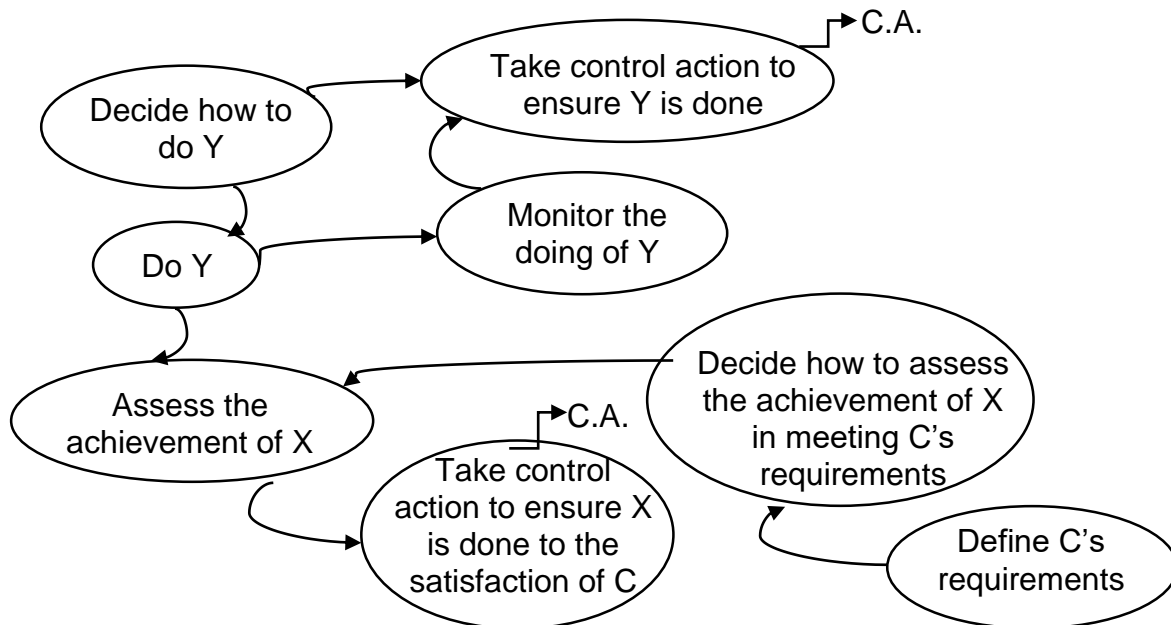
## Conceptual Modelling:

### Conceptual Model Building:

Brian Wilson (2001) states the model is built based on the CATWOE elements themselves where:

- T – to do X
- W – doing Y will lead to the achievement of X

The modelling can begin by making sure that activities exist to do Y and by then adding activities to make sure that these lead to the achievement of X. We then add a customer (C) so that the model becomes: a system to do X by Y in order to satisfy the requirement of C.



### An Initial Conceptual Model:

Due to this being a 'soft' problem with many different variables, requirements and uncertainty about what is and isn't working within the student rep system this is an initial conceptual model that looks into identifying the problems and providing solutions which can later be built upon.



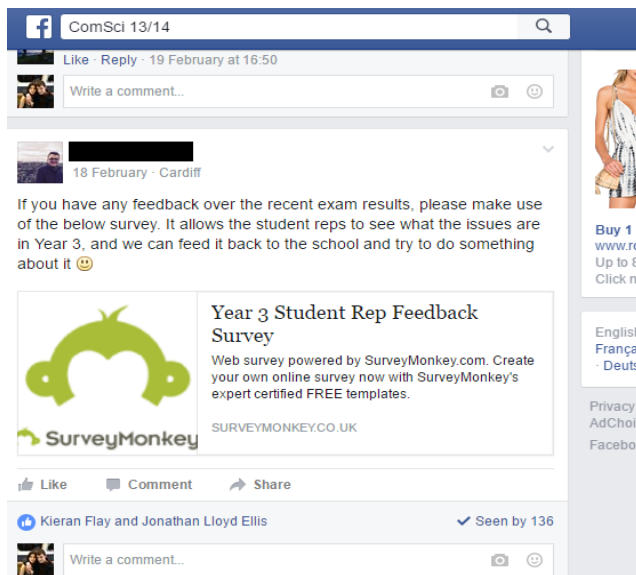
## **Gap Analysis & Initial Ideas:**

The conceptual model can now be used along with all the other research to come up with potential ideas and proposals through a gap analysis.

<b>Activity from conceptual model</b>	<b>How is it currently done?</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
Assemble knowledge about the need of students regarding the student rep system	Waiting for students to raise own issues and feedback through student reps	Sending out a questionnaire mid-year to see how students feel about the student rep system -> allowing continuous improvement to take place
Promote services on offer	Word of mouth, through initial talk at start of year	Include more of a focus on the benefits of student reps in the initial talk and email out a list of ways students can engage with student reps
Monitor student response to solutions/service delivered	Waiting for students to raise own issues and feedback through student reps	Sending out a brief email about changes happening, issues discussed and work that is still in the pipeline every few months
Know about current student rep system	Student rep co-ordinator given presentation pack and talk by the student union at start of year	Use conceptual model to see the 'bigger picture' of interlinking elements – have standardised processes
Identify expectations for performance in terms of degree of support	Nothing done – waits for a complaint	Sending out a questionnaire mid-year to see how students feel about the student rep system -> allowing continuous improvement to take place
Assemble knowledge about other student rep systems (other unis)	Nothing done	Pro-actively look at best practices and innovative ways other schools or universities are using

## Ideas Implemented during project:

Some of my ideas, proposals and recommendations have been implemented during the duration of this project. I have evaluated their successfulness and possible improvements so that use for the following academic year 2016/2017 is effective.



### 1) Using an online survey with the possibility of anonymity to collect issues by students:

This was used by Year 3 student reps in February as a means of collecting feedback to be used or raised in the upcoming Student Staff Panel – it was created using 'Survey Monkey' and the link was provided to students on Facebook. 136 students saw this link and therefore potentially had the opportunity to provide their feedback.

Evaluation – More feedback was received than usually gathered, there

were around 10-15 results received and these were then fed back into the student staff panel meeting.

### 2) Having a notice board to display Student Reps for all year groups:

This was implemented in April and is located on floor 2 outside N/2.21. Pictures of the reps (except for final year who provided their own pictures earlier on the year) were taken from SIMs as a last resort – as previously mentioned; collecting student rep pictures as part of the election process may solve turnaround time and ease in obtaining the rep's pictures for display purposes.

There are 6 steps to effectively use a noticeboard as identified by the NHS Wales Communications Officers at the 1000 Lives Plus Communications Study (2011) about how to use notice boards to communicate effectively; the 5 most important to this project are:

- 1) Audit – this focuses on
  - a. Position – e.g. in a populated office area where staff work, or a waiting room.
  - b. Footfall – i.e. how many people pass the notice board and will see it.
  - c. Size – larger boards can become 'wallpaper' and not really arrest the eye. Anything posted above average eye height in a corridor will probably not be seen.
  - d. Visibility – is a board obscured by equipment? Current usage – do people look at it / act on information they see already?
- 2) Resite - Position is very important; a great board can be in totally the wrong place. It might be necessary to reposition boards and the criteria identified in the previous step all apply

- 3) Recruit - It's important for people to know which boards they are responsible for, and what exactly they are required to do e.g. a few minutes at the end of each month reviewing notices and removing out-of-date ones
- 4) Add Content - The first step to adding content is to decide what key messages should be standard across all 'official' notice boards. This may include a values statement, the latest edition of a newsletter, student safety and other improvement messages, contact details for patient feedback etc
- 5) Audit Again – See if the board is working. Other 'interactive' points include sponsor forms, sign-up sheets, and petitions. It is possible to gain feedback on any issue by asking people to write on a blank poster (and attaching a pen), although this would need to be monitored carefully.



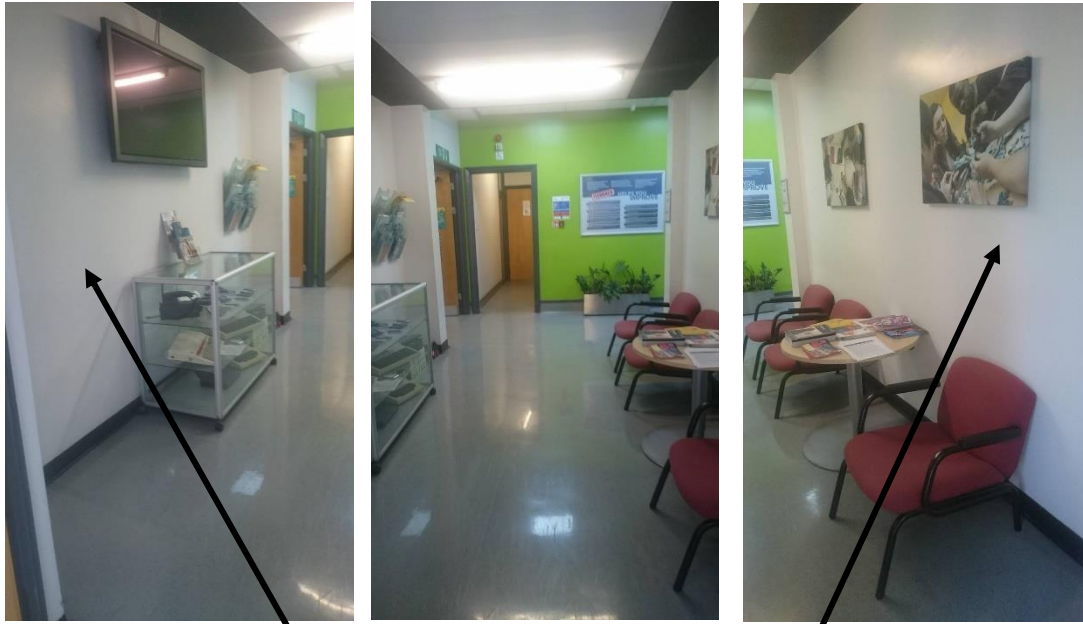
Evaluation – upon looking at the content displayed an improvement would be providing the reps personal email where the rep has agreed to give this out; this should increase quicker response time when they are contacted (step 4 content). The

location of the board is also badly placed – it is not on a main walk stream and is unlikely to be noticed. If a drop box is bought I would suggest placing the board near the box so that if students want to contact a rep directly instead of using the box they can find the details to do so (step 5 – audit again). As well as this, placing the information in a more noticable place will increase students knowledge of who the reps actually are (step 1 – audit, step 2 – resite).

The size of the text could also be bigger (once the board is moved to a footfall area) where people are walking past it will be important that main details and what the board is about stands out. There are currently no competing messages and the board isn't overloaded for it's size so this is a good sign.



Proposed location of board in future:



On either wall of the corridor on floor outside the computer science & informatics reception and along the walk way to the computer labs

Preferable location would be on the side with the TV screen because there is viable room here to place a drop box if needed.

This location is better suited because it has a high frequency of use by students – all year groups have access and need to use the computer labs, as well as being near the reception. This is suitable for a feedback collection point and rep display board as staff can easily direct students towards this display / information board. In the case of a drop box being implemented, this placement will also ensure that 'abuse' of the box e.g. jokes are less likely to take. The only better location would be on the green wall by the plant pot but this is already in use with another board.



## **Meeting Conducted with Tom Spare (Student Union Representative) :**

As part of being able to put some of the proposals and recommendations into action it was important that I meet and discuss with a Student Union Representative who would be able to provide suggestions and insight into what is and isn't possible in the reception area as well as providing further contacts I could use/meet with to implement my ideas to the next stage e.g. providing a student rep drop box in the computer science and informatics reception.

### **Meeting 1 – Topics Covered:**

1. The progress/whereabouts of the drop box that had been ordered by the student rep coordinator for the use of the student reps to collect problems/queries/issues with the option of anonymity to be placed outside the school's reception area
  2. The possibility of a board that displays all the students reps (Name, Picture, Contact Email) to be placed outside the school's reception area
  3. The possibility of adding a button or link to the Intranet page which links to a Student Rep Area. Information of the process involved in order to implement this
  4. The possibility of obtaining contact details of other schools' student reps or student rep coordinator to gather student rep election processes from e.g.) Maths school, Business School etc.
  5. Information about the broken links etc. of [www.cardiff.ac.uk/studentvoice/about/students](http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/studentvoice/about/students) website
  6. Information about what student reps learn/gain from the student union training sessions (I plan to use this information to help highlight the benefits to students they can gain by becoming a student rep) e.g. is there a certificate
  7. The process or possibility of implementing/creating a short 5-10 minute video about student reps to be displayed after the Student Union talk in the first lecture as part of the student rep election process
  8. Key dates I will need to know about when designing a new student rep election process for the school of computer science & informatics
  9. What services or resources the student union can provide towards student rep elections
- 
1. The whereabouts of the order will be looked into
  2. This is possible – the student union are willing to pay half of the fees involved in the creation of the board. Proposed cost will be emailed over to the student rep coordinator if requested.
  3. Possibly a viable idea, but it will need further information from myself so that it can be provided and reviewed by student union who will also contact Claire Blakeway
  4. This information has been recently withdrawn from students, although it was provided before. Tom will ask his manager if he can provide me or Helen the information
  5. A new website within the Student Union website has been created this year and can be found at: <http://www.cardiffstudents.com/your-voice/academic-reps/> However, the issue has been noted as it does look bad to have broken content and there is no clear linkage to where the new website can be located.

6. A certificate is provided at the end of the year. Confidence and networking training. Information pack and guidance. Scenario training (possible problems and how to deal with them). Additional training in a full range of skills is also available from the Skills Development Service which has their own certifications in Leadership, Personal Effectiveness and Communication.
7. The student union have recently created a video about student reps that can be used as part of the student rep election process – although a good idea the student union would prefer if the school used their own video provided at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wILszfg0k2A>
8. Applications can be received before start of the academic year. Time wise is up to you however the student union must be notified of who the reps will be by the end of October and definitely before the first student staff panel meeting.
9. Half the fee/cost of some items such as a board or drop box. Student Union also provide the initial student rep election talk and also the training to the selected student reps. The Student Union can also facilitate the voting procedure via their website as well as host the potential candidate profiles and collect candidate election forms (This has to be agreed and organised in conjunction with the school's student rep coordinator who needs to provide the requirements).

### **Meeting 1 – Actions taken forwards:**

- Write up and email across proposed ideas behind extra button/link on the Intranet page. Information to include consists of the purpose of the button and what possible content could be placed there. How it would be used. Possible advantages.
- Contact with President Claire Blakeway who *“As President, Claire leads the Elected Officer team and the Students' Union as a whole and acts as the key link to the University's Vice-Chancellor, Pro Vice-Chancellors, Council and Senate, as well as the NUS and other key stakeholders.” Found at <http://www.cardiffstudents.com/your-voice/elected-officers/president/>* In order to progress with idea regarding button/link on the Intranet Page.
- Wait for a response on a number of topics from Tom Spare.

### **Follow up:**

The button/link on the Intranet Page can be proposed and sent to University IT Services – because it is on a large scale, it is out of control of the Student Union. The student rep coordinator can request a drop box and notice board which will be made up by the Student Union.

To run elections of the Student Union website the coordinator needs to provide:

- Template application form for what the school requires (photo, name, manifesto etc.)
- How many posts (number of reps required)
- Which specific students can vote for which post

\*Full email can be found in appendices\*

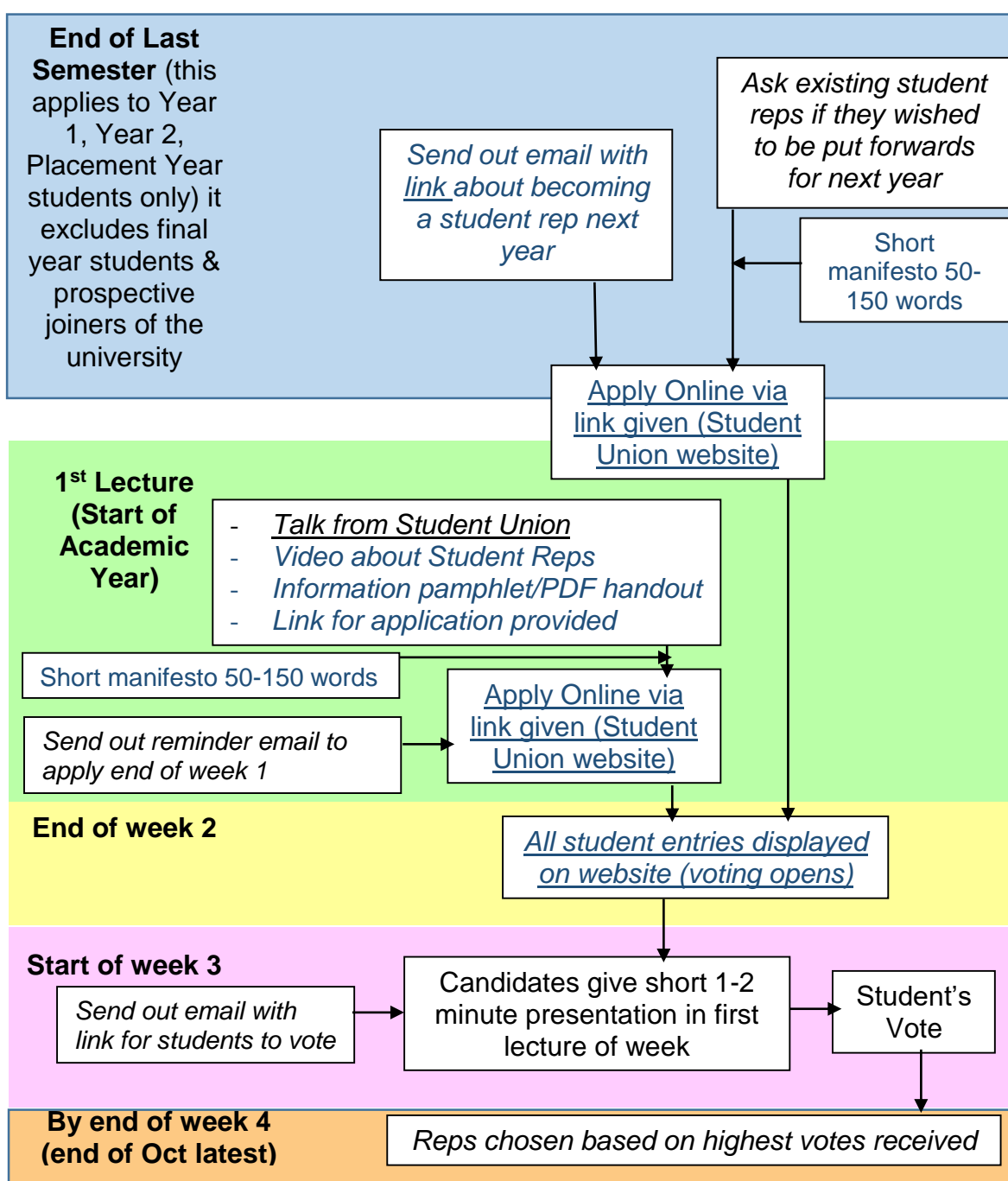
## Proposed Process & Recommendations Student Rep Election Procedure:

### Proposal 1 (With Aid of Student Union):

This proposal assumes: The student rep coordinator of school of Computer Science & Informatics has set up / provided requirements of what is needed / the school's proposed process to the Student Union who will aid the process by displaying interested candidate's information and allowing students to vote for who they wish via the Student Union website.

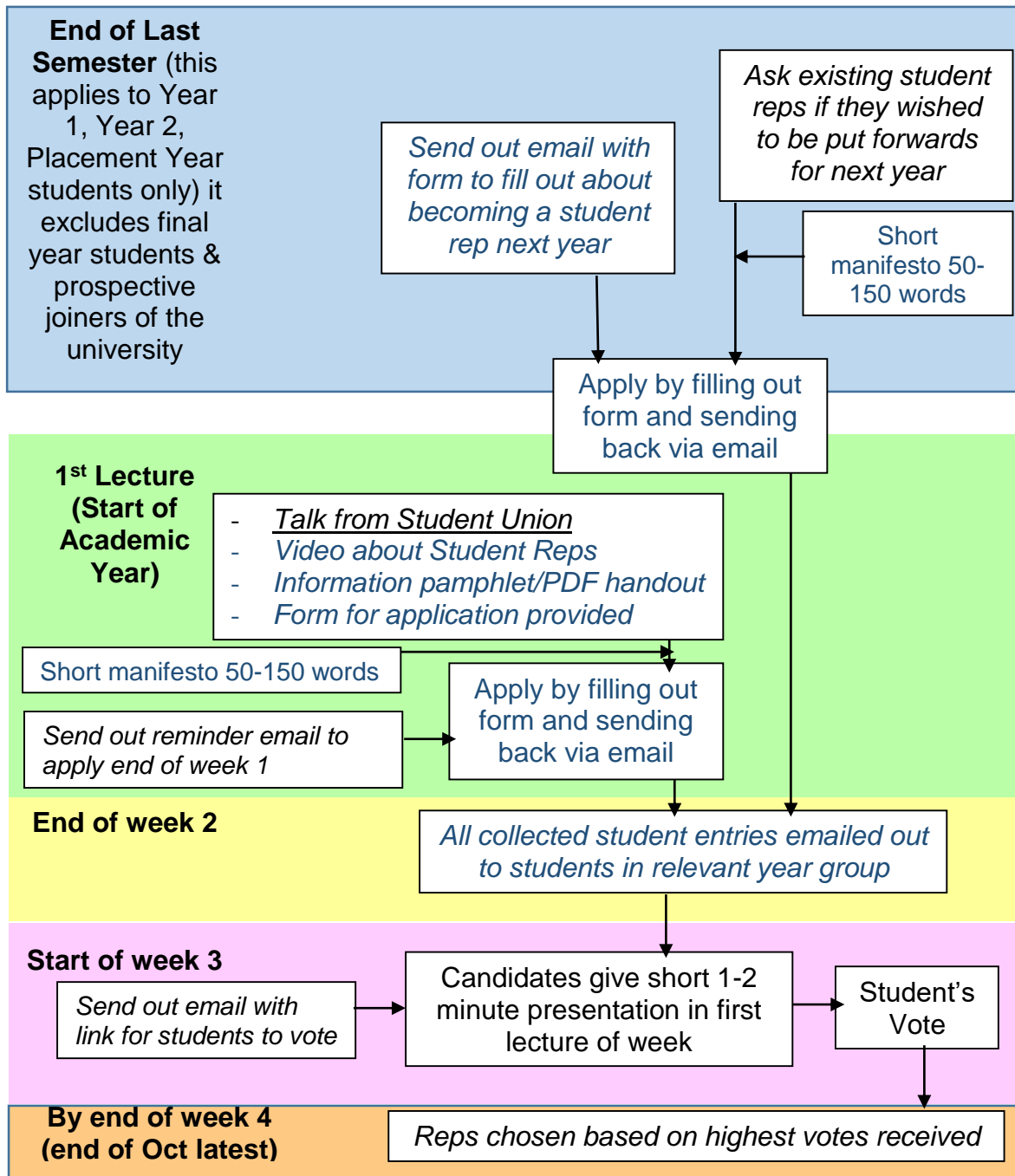
**Key:**

- Student Union related activity
- New addition to student rep process
- Coordinator / staff activity



## **Proposal 2 (Kept within school of Computer Science & Informatics):**

This proposal assumes: Everything besides the original/existing student union talk and demo of video is conducted by the school (most likely by the student rep coordinator). The difference is essentially creating a form to collect data from interested students that is sent out by email and then collecting the returned forms and sending out an email with candidates and a link to vote anonymously.



### **Advantages & Disadvantages of Proposals:**

The advantage of proposal 1 (with aid of student union) is that although initially it will be time consuming to set up and will involve liaising with the student union, afterwards a lot of the work effort is picked up by the student union. For example they will collect all the student applications and make them available online as well as facilitating the voting process – this will save several hours of the student rep coordinator's time in the long run. The requirements the coordinator wishes to have are still followed and the only real activities the coordinator needs to be involved in is promoting the student rep system at the start of the year, reminding interested candidates to apply and then notifying the students of the results. The main disadvantage is the effort required initially to set it all up with the student union – as seen throughout the course of this project, communication between the student union can take weeks at a time.

Proposal 2 (kept within school of computer science & informatics) may possibly allow a more tailored approach and will be a little bit less restrictive on time frames – however the majority of the work is dealt with by the coordinator and so sufficient time needs to be set aside for this.

Both proposals utilise practices identified in research of other universities (see Conclusion of findings & recommendations on page 38) and the only difference is essentially deciding whether higher effort at the beginning is worth the benefits of lower work load in the foreseeable future.

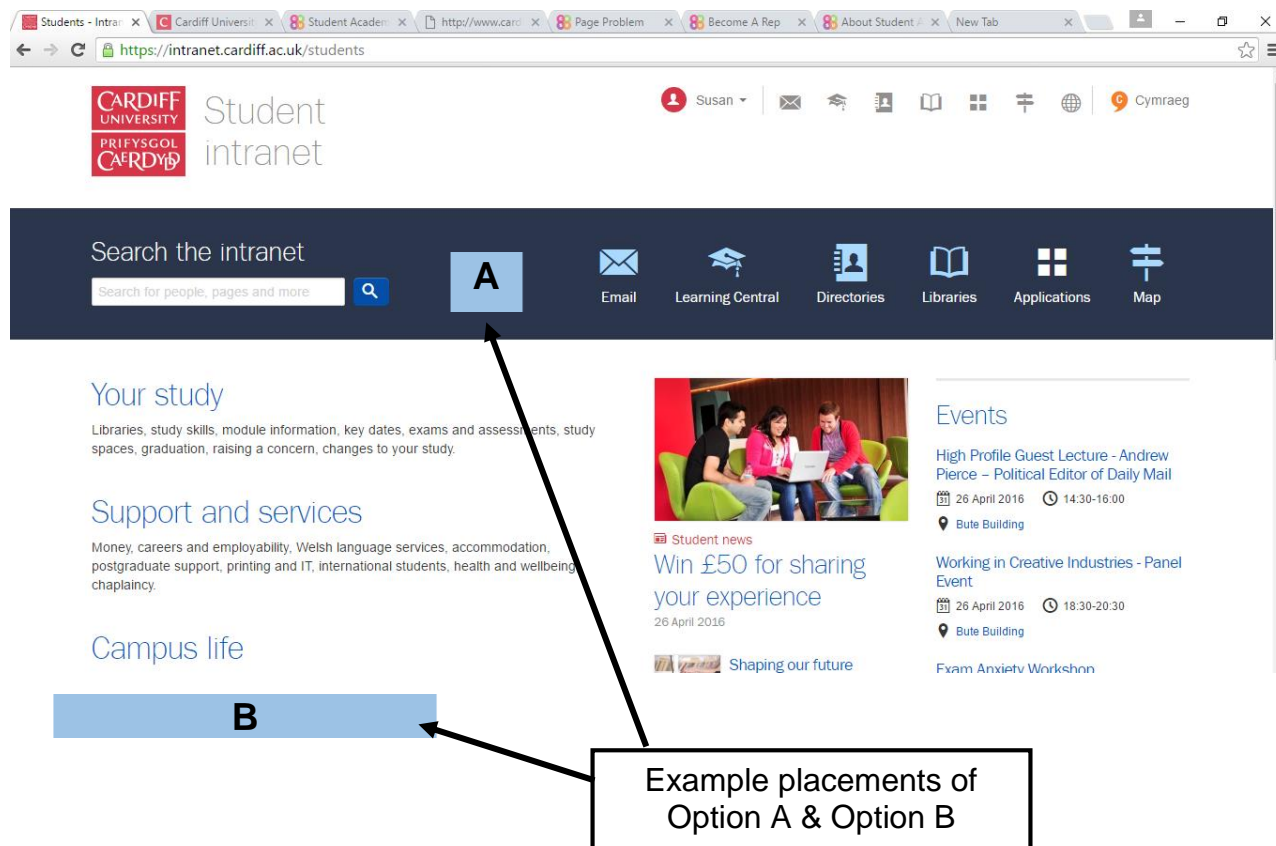
## **Proposal of Student Rep Inclusion on Intranet Page:**

This proposal includes one of two options:

A) Including a Student Rep Button along the top banner

OR

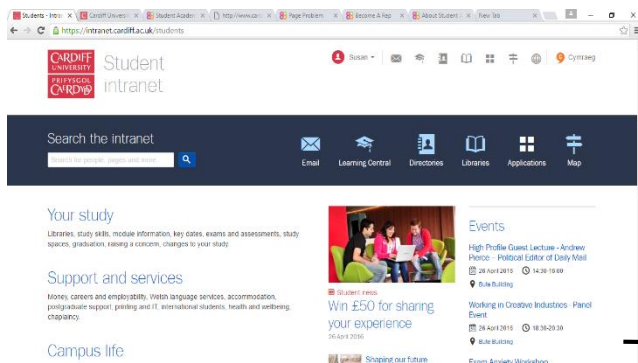
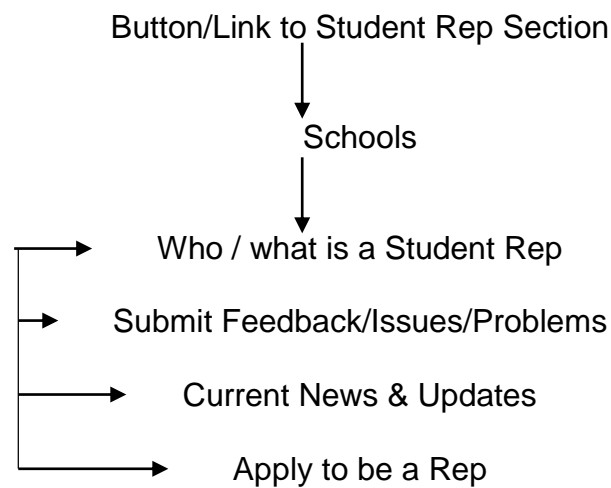
B) Including a Student Rep Link along the side



## **Advantages of button or link to student rep information/services:**

- More accessible and easier to locate
- Greater visibility of service e.g. students may click on the link/button out of curiosity and get involved
- Provides quick access to important information e.g. who to contact
- Creates a bridge between a platform (the intranet) that students access several times on a daily basis and the student union's student rep content
- Provides a school location to host updates / information / survey links etc. as opposed to students posting this on social media platforms such as Facebook groups where all students may not have access or be included
- Provides an alternative place to collect feedback other than emailing student reps or using a drop box
- Interested schools can provide/upload school specific content

## Proposed Schema:



### Schools:

- Law
- Computer Science & Informatics
- Business

List of  
participating  
schools

Click on proposed  
new button/link

Once a school  
is selected,  
school relevant  
content only

### Student Reps – Comp Science & Informatics:

- Who / what is a student rep
- Submit Feedback/Issues/Problems
- Current News & Updates
- Apply to be a Rep

Same list of  
contents  
regardless of  
which school  
chosen



### What / who is a student rep:

#### Current student reps

Picture of  
rep

Picture of  
rep

Picture of  
rep

Name  
Email  
Degree Scheme

Name  
Email  
Degree Scheme

Name  
Email  
Degree Scheme

#### What is a student rep?

[paragraph about reps + link to student union student rep website]

[embedded video of student reps]

Degree scheme is required to differentiate between different specialisms e.g. Comp Sci / business information systems / software engineering

Link to:

<http://www.cardiffstudents.com/your-voice/academic-reps/>

Video link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wLszfg0k2A>

#### **Option A: Submit Feedback/Issues/Problems:**

[Constantly open link to a online survey that is anonymous to use – both staff and students can use this survey link with the option to provide their email if they wish to be known/contacted]

#### **Option B: Submit Feedback/Issues/Problems:**

Year 1:  
[survey link]

Placement:  
[survey link]

Year 2:  
[survey link]

General / All years  
[survey link]

Year 3:  
[survey link]

There are **two options** for the submitting feedback page.

Option A: Is a link that all year groups in that particular school use and within the survey itself you can select the year you are in. The benefit of this option is that a clear overall picture across all years will be easy to identify  
e.g. x year are having the most problems  
e.g. all years are having issues with the lab

Option B: This option provides a separate link to each year group's survey. Benefits of this will include being able to customise the survey by year. Another benefit is that student reps of a particular year will only have to see /read their year group's problems without having to filter through all the other comments

Both options will allow reps and the coordinator to have access to check submitted issues which can be done as regularly as needed. It may be possible to implement a way to keep issues logged in a database.



**Current News & Updates:**

Upcoming meeting dates:

[E.g. student staff panel meeting, general meeting dates]

News / Updates:

[Main topics of focus, actions and progress taken etc. – possibly can upload newsletter]

**Apply to be a student rep:**

[Description of whatever that particular school's process is]

[Application Link]

Option A – Application Link, links directly to student union election site which will have a form to fill in; from here the student union facilitates displaying the reps that have applied and also provides a way for students to vote for the reps they want

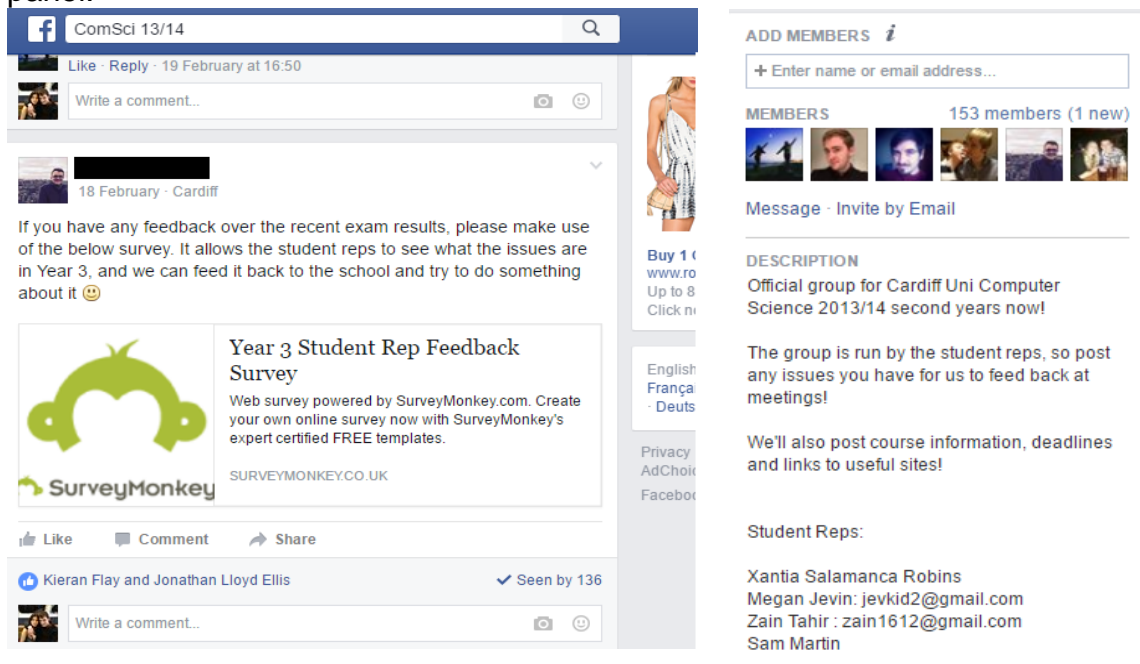
Option B – Application Link, links to personalised application form created for Computer Science

Option C – Application Link, links to an email (e.g. the coordinator) of which to submit or write the application to

## Evaluation:

In this evaluation there will be a comparison between the proposal of a student rep button on the Intranet with current methods used to promote and engage students with the service.

Currently, Facebook is used a lot by Student Reps to post information related to the student rep service, for example asking students for feedback before a student staff panel.



However not all year groups have a student rep run Facebook group so this is not always effective. Seen in the example above (taken from Year 3 Computer Science Facebook Group) you can see that the reps have included their names and personal email addresses that students can use to locate them – however not all reps for year 3 are listed on the page and therefore there is a lack of information. The successfulness of using Facebook for student rep content is heavily reliant on the rep/reps who create and start the Facebook page, who may have good intentions at the start but quickly become overwhelmed with the workload. Having a student rep button on the Intranet not only makes the content more credible and accessible to all students but allows the workload to be spread more along all the reps and not just the original creator of the group. Facebook could still be used as an aid and communication platform but probably shouldn't be the main way to engage with a student rep or find out about its services.

Emails are also often utilised to gather feedback (see picture below). Although this is good as a reminder, it does not really allow students to provide feedback throughout the course of the year – having the student rep button will provide a fixed location the students can always access and then using an email near to the time of student staff panels may aid an activity rise in the numbers of feedback given.



PhillipsHR@cardiff.ac.uk  
05/02/2016



The next student staff panel is taking place on Wednesday 10th Feb, and in order to gather your comments positive and negative we have set up a survey.

Which can we found at <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/87537LB>

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### Year 3 Student Rep Feedback Survey

[www.surveymonkey.co.uk](http://www.surveymonkey.co.uk)

Web survey powered by SurveyMonkey.com. Create your own online survey now with SurveyMonkey's expert certified FREE templates.

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SSP co-ordinator

## **Focus Group on Proposed Ideas**

It was an aim to conduct a focus group with current student reps on the proposals given above to help improve the design and bring forwards any additional ideas – however due to time restraints and mostly the exam period it was not possible to collect a group of student reps to conduct this. However it was possible to collect some feedback by emailing willing reps to find out about their ideas on the proposals.

As part of this the following question was asked:

Could you for each proposal state whether you think it's

- 1) Useful or not
- 2) Easy to understand
- 3) Will be used by students
- 4) General comments

The general response received was that they believe it will be useful however its usefulness will be reliant on ensuring that the new processes and button is promoted by the school and also the reps themselves otherwise student's may not know it exists and therefore will not use it. One rep said 'it will be useful for the student reps too because we can access everything in one area instead of trawling through emails and survey responses'. They think the proposed layouts are easy to understand and follow because 'the links give clear indication what content is behind them' and 'once students know about it, it will probably be used'. General comments included 'when would this be happening?' and 'would be willing to test it once it's ready'. Overall I think the feedback received was positive and a focus group could still be held for final adjustments and ideas.

## **Business Case for Student Intranet Button/Link**

<b>Project Title:</b>	How can we better support the student rep system? – Proposal of Student Rep Inclusion on Intranet Page
<b>Date:</b>	5 <sup>th</sup> May 2016
<b>Project Manager:</b>	TBC
<b>Independent Reviewer:</b>	Helen Phillips
<b>Project Sponsor/Owner</b>	Cardiff University – School of Computer Science
<b>Client / senior user</b>	Student Rep Coordinators

### **Executive Summary**

This project aims to provide a student rep button or link on the main school intranet page to support the student rep system in many different aspects – it aims to create greater visibility of the service and make it more accessible and easier to locate. The addition of the button or link will create a bridge between the intranet and the student union's student rep content and will also provide a school specific location to host updates / information and survey links which will offer an alternative place to collect feedback other than emailing students and using a drop box. It will provide quick and easy access to important information regarding the student rep service and will be consistent with Cardiff University's strategy of (The Way Forwards: Education and Students).

This business case considers the following options: The addition of a button or link on the intranet page implemented basically for free, a button or link implemented on the intranet page with cost involved or the option of doing nothing. My overall recommendation for this project is either option to implement/add the button or link (potentially costing nothing other than time – see option 2a) because it will increase student participation and engagement levels with the student rep service which may bring about several other benefits such as higher National Student Survey rankings and a higher turnaround of feedback which would cause changes with the university for the better and improve student satisfaction and wellbeing. If the method discussed below is utilised where the implementation is free then cost pays itself back immediately taking roughly 5 months to complete. A decision based on how quick the university would like to have implementation would need to therefore be considered.

#### **Participant Involvement include:**

- Cardiff University School of Computer Science (project sponsor/owner)
- Student Rep Coordinator (client/senior user)
- Student Reps (users)
- Either Final Year Project Student or Student Union (development of solution)
- Other Schools within the University (secondary users)
- University IT Services

### **Project Purpose and Reasons**

*Outline the reasons for the project to take place and how they are consistent with Cardiff University's strategy. See 'The Way Forward: Education and Students' attached in Other Files with this Project.*

The reason for this project include:

- Simplifying the complexity and processes involved to be more streamlined and efficient for students using and accessing the student rep service
- Providing greater viability of the student rep service
- Making the service easier to use and more accessible to students
- Reduction in the time it takes to access and locate important information to the service
- Creating a standardised process that could potentially be used by all schools in the university
- Reducing the effort of collecting and processing feedback for the student reps and coordinator
- Creating a bridge between the intranet and the student rep content which will allow faster access, searching and navigation of relevant material
- The ability to provide school specific content (controlled by only allowing a student of that school to see the content which would combat privacy issues which means this content can't be posted on the student union website)
- Overall this will reduce the amount of time and effort spent by student rep & the coordinator when running the service but also the time and effort students spend trying to use the service

This project is consistent with Cardiff University's strategy (The Way Forwards: Education and Students) because it falls under a number of categories including "Enhancement Activities – *Regularly review and enhance our academic and professional services supporting students, always aiming to provide an excellent service*". By implementing this button/link the university will be enhancing their student services which will support students by making it easier and more accessible for students to raise issues and problems they are having to their school which can then be resolved much quicker and will aid student's performance and wellbeing. Furthermore it will increase visibility of the service to students and increase participation levels which may bring out interesting and innovative ideas the university could use as well as providing an easy and standard method that could help students that need help and support the most.

It also aligns with "Assurance Activities - *Build a culture of quality moving from a purely functionalist approach to one of continuous improvement and enhancement that provides a clear articulation of how these processes are managed centrally, at College and School level*" is also met because this button/link will be a large improvement to the student rep service with many benefits to the students and indirectly the university as well as allowing schools within the university to manage and organise more specific processes aligned to that school.

## Options

Options for this project include:

- **Do Nothing** – This option consists of continuing with the way things current are for the student rep service – based on the advantages and disadvantages below I do not recommend this option.

Advantages: Ways of working and current processes do not change, therefore no new training required. No extra cost or time associated with this option. Any money set aside for student rep services can be used/invested elsewhere within the university if required.

Disadvantages: Does not follow the university's 'Way Forward Strategy' e.g.

*"Regularly review and enhance our academic and professional services supporting students, always aiming to provide an excellent service"*. This option isn't a solution at all and currently as seen in the findings of this project the issues and problems with the student rep service are impacting a lot of students who feel that *'nothing credible has come of it'* there's *'no real system'* and it *'needs significant improvement'* which shows the extent and deepness of the issues that need to be addressed. Furthermore it was mentioned as part of advantages that no new training is required however student reps are trained upon election and so for new reps there would not be any change in ways of working or processes. There will be no change in student wellbeing or satisfaction if nothing is done, potentially this could get worse if compared to other university rankings (for example student national survey results for satisfaction etc.) if other universities improve their services and Cardiff University does nothing.

- **Implementation of button/link on intranet page** – This consists of adding/implementing a button/link to the intranet page which contains student rep service related content for both the overall service but also school specific content. This option consists of two options (free implementation) and (implementation with a cost involved); advantages and disadvantages of the two options have been analysed in detail below. General advantages and disadvantages applicable to both options are:

Advantages: The button/link does not compromise anything else and content (schema structure) will be completely tailor based on the requirements, findings and recommendations found from this final year project 'how can we better support the student rep system?' which means that this project has been created with students in mind based on their opinions and feelings about the student rep service. It is also the result of in-depth research across the entire problems and issues currently in the student rep service and has gone through focus groups and discussions with student reps, coordinators, student union, staff and the students themselves. If the coordinator and student reps are involved in the testing and any other ideas and requirements of the system, it will be easier for them to use afterwards and will reduce any training that may be needed. It is a flexible approach that can evolve or change over time as required.

Disadvantages: Someone will need to update and maintain the content of the additional link/button which will take some extra time here and there. There could also be unnoticed bugs that will need to be solved down the road. Depending on what content is included, if my other proposal of 'who are the student reps' go ahead which contains student names, emails and pictures through this link/button then there will need to be considerations of the Data Protection Act to ensure that details are not stored on the site for longer than agreed for or necessary and not

without the consent of the student reps or coordinators involved. The benefits of having this button/link may not be as effective as originally thought and students may still not find it easier to engage, locate information and use the service.

2a) **Free Implementation** - This option consists of providing a final year project related to the creation, implementation, testing and possible alternative designs of the button/link on the intranet page – possibly as a sister project to this one due to lots of relevant research, evidence and suitable design work for the proposal of this new project. Based on the advantages and disadvantages below, but also the general advantages and disadvantages of implementing a button/link on the intranet, I think this is the best option.

Advantages: Is significantly cheaper (free) than using any of: (Student Union Staff, University IT Services Staff, CompSci Staff or paid CompSci students through the Job Shop) to implement the button/link. Completed as a final year project would significantly impact the quality of the outcome due to substantial effort and time being allocated to the student to focus, develop and make the best possible implantation they can – this would also be aided by a project supervisor who may specialise in Human Computer Interaction or another noteworthy skill to this task which would provide specialist advice to be utilised in the project. It is also likely whoever choses to do this project will be interested and excited about its potential which ultimately achieves higher standards. A final year project will provide full documentation of the implementation and everything to do with the button/link that can be used for any extra modifications in the future or potential help guides.

Disadvantages: The biggest disadvantage of this is the time before implementation would happen (final year projects are conducted in the second half of the academic year and last around 5 months long). The biggest impact of this would be that it would not benefit students until academic year 2017/18 if the project was started in academic year 2016/17 as a final year project. A disadvantage of this would be finding a final year student who is passionate and interested about this project to take it up.

2b) **Implementation with cost involved** – This option consists of any staff such as (Student Union Staff, University IT Services Staff, CompSci Staff or paid CompSci students through the Job Shop) used to create, implement and test the inclusion of the student rep button/link on the university intranet. Based on the advantages and disadvantages below, but also the general advantages and disadvantages of implementing a button/link on the intranet I think this is the second best option to take forwards.

Advantages: The project would be achieved the fastest from this option and benefits to students would happen sooner – the project could start whenever (straight away if needed) in comparison to option 2a which has time restrictions in place. Due to benefits appearing sooner, impact towards student satisfaction and wellbeing will be realised quicker and the university would gain advantage earlier indirectly from results from surveys such as the national student survey.

Disadvantages: This is the most expensive option (especially in the short-term) due to the university having to resource staff or students and pay them for their time. This may cause a rushed implementation either due to restriction on budget or time limitations that staff have to work on the project alongside their other duties. The amount of time and dedication spent on the project would nowhere



near as much match that of a final year student project. Full documentation may not occur and any minor changes or bugs found may add extra costs to the project in terms of time or finding a resource who can make changes.

**Recommended Option – 2A (free implementation of a button/link on the intranet page):**

Overall I think this is the best option because although the time it will take to complete is much greater than the other option the dedication and specialism gained from a final year project student would be much better in the long run and would create something that would be valuable to the students. This project also addresses some main issues as identified in my final year project ‘how can we better support the student rep system?’ and provides solutions for all schools in the university mainly concerning:

- Ensuring the student cohort know who their student reps are for the course/year and how to contact or reach out to them for help
- Increasing ways and that students can voice their concerns and use the service (providing higher engagement with students)
- Ways to promote and communicate what changes/solutions have happened because of the student rep service other than Facebook

Specifically for the school of computer science & informatics it becomes part of another solution to address:

- Designing a standardised process to become a student rep and how it works

There is also the possibility of including other aspects and recommendations found such as an archive system for student staff panel meeting minutes that could potentially be added as a resource the button/link can connect students and staff to in the future. I believe implementing this button/link would help Cardiff University have student's best interest at heart and also follows the ‘way forward strategy’.

**Benefits**

**Benefits of Implementation of a button/link for the student rep service on the intranet:**

- An increase in the student cohort knowing who their student reps are for the course/year and how to contact or reach out to them for help. This will be measured by using the same initial questionnaire as used in the project ‘how can we better support the student rep system?’ and comparing figures obtained previously with the new figures.
- Increasing ways that students can voice their concerns and use the service (providing higher engagement with students). This will be measured by the amount of feedback the school receives verses previous figures and also a figure comparison of the results regarding this topic when the initial questionnaire is re-completed.
- Increasing the promotion and communication of what changes/solutions have happened because of the student rep service. This will again be measured by results obtained from the re-completion of the initial questionnaire.
- Reducing the effort required to access and locate information about the student rep service. Providing quick access to important information. This will be measured by heuristic evaluation, observation & timings for set tasks carried



out using the method and the new button/link method. This can be measured time wise e.g. 20 minutes verses 5 minutes.

- Increasing the visibility of service e.g. students may click on the link/button out of curiosity and get involved. This will be measured by new participation numbers verses old figures and also responses gathered from re-completed initial questionnaire.
- Simplifying the complexity and processes involved to be more streamlined and consistent: The benefit of this will be measured in increase of student morale levels and overall satisfaction with the student rep system.
- A standardised area that can be used across all schools within the University for their Student Rep System: The success of this will be measured by how many schools across the university decide to use the new button/link. A percentage of success can then be seen.
- Ensuring that the university are keeping up with feedback/issues/problems given through the student rep service. This may be measured by student satisfaction with the service in terms of receiving timely information about updates and progress/solutions put in place because of the student rep system.
- Higher student satisfaction levels as a whole. This could be monitored by comparing national student survey statistics with ones for the following year.

**Dis-Benefits of Implementation of a button/link for the student rep service on the intranet:**

- The student reps and the coordinator will initially take longer to make use of the new button/link especially in the beginning when school specific content has to be loaded and written – however after this phase, most likely only updates and minutes will need to be updated every month or so and who the reps are yearly.
- Some time spent promoting the new button/link to students will most likely be required
- It is one extra thing the student reps and the coordinator need to add to their workload regarding the student rep service

**Risks**

**Key:**

- **Likelihood** (1 Low – little chance that this is likely to happen during the project, 2 Moderate – this is likely to happen a few times during the change project, 3 High – is likely to happen many times during the change project)
- **Impact** (1 Low – is unlikely to adversely affect the project performance indicators e.g. cost, time, quality, 2 Moderate - is likely to affect the performance indicators of the project but not significantly, 3 High – is likely to significantly affect the performance indicators of the project)
- **Overall Risk Rating** (this is calculated by Likelihood x Impact)

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Likelihood</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Control Measures</b>	<b>Overall Risk Rating</b>
Students may find the content within the button/link difficult or frustrating to use.	<b>1 (Low)</b> – This is low because the link/button has come about from student opinions and comments and has been designed with simplicity and a faster method to find out information regarding student reps in mind.	<b>2 (Moderate)</b> – May essentially just waste time implementing a button/link and content if the users (students) find it too frustrating or too long to use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promote ease of use (maybe short demo to students)</li> <li>- Involve users in decision making process; ensure their opinions, concerns and ideas are heard early on</li> <li>- Provide help / documentation if needed</li> </ul>	<b>2</b>
Project may take longer at any phase e.g.) designing, implementing etc. than planned for or project is not chosen immediately by a final year student	<b>2 (Moderate)</b> - Due to choosing the free option there is a likelihood that nobody will choose this as their project or the student completing the project may be lazy and not actually complete the project	<b>2 (Moderate)</b> – This would further infuriate students to find out nothing is still being done. As well as this the impact could be a half completed or bad implementation of the project which if completely unusable will be a waste of time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure all possible risks are captured and considered when planning the project time scales at the start of the project</li> <li>- Allocating contingency time within each stage of the project as necessary</li> <li>- Ensuring a good flow of communication of any problems between student &amp; supervisor</li> </ul>	<b>4</b>
The new system is not used by many/all schools within the university (process is not	<b>2 (Moderate)</b> – this is moderate because different schools may not realise fully at the start of the project the	<b>1 (Low)</b> – I have decided the impact of this is low because it will not change the quality of the button/link for the school of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure to speak to student rep coordinators from all schools and promote idea and ask for requirements at</li> </ul>	<b>3</b>

standardised enough)	potential for their student rep service and after an example may join in at a later time	computer science and informatics and it will still address the main issues required by this school	the start of the project - Gauge interest of other schools and discuss with the student union	
Incorrect or missing data during data uploaded onto the button/link	<b>1 (Low)</b> – there is not a lot of information or data transfer at all and only particular aspects such as bad links or incorrect rep contact email addresses would really pose an issue	<b>3 (High)</b> – the impact of incorrect data would significantly impact the quality of the system in a way that students may lose faith in the information there or assumes the survey link will always be broken and doesn't give it a second attempt	- Double check content during entry - Student reps should check that their contact information is up to date and correct - The use of test cases to see if buttons and links work	<b>3</b>
System's Benefit Attainment Incorrectly Calculated e.g.) Does not increase student participation as much as predicted, new button/link cannot be used by all schools within the university	<b>1 (Low)</b> – The likelihood that the system's benefits will match the cost/benefit calculations are low due to a lot of estimation & uncertainty taking place but seeing as there is no cost to having the implementation – as long as some students benefit then it is worth having. E.g.) changes to student satisfaction	<b>2 (Moderate)</b> – This would only have implications for time being wasted completing this project and still requiring a viable solution to combat issues. However it should not affect the time or the quality of the project	- Take a middle ground approach when deciding costs or benefits (not optimistic or pessimistic view) - Look at benefits realistically -	<b>2</b>

	and wellbeing will be difficult to estimate			
Impact of new button/link having effects on other systems or ways of working	<b>2 (Moderate)</b> – The likelihood is moderate because the university would need to connect it to student union website content as well and other links which could mean a few errors are likely to come up during testing	<b>2 (Moderate)</b> – This will have an impact on the project's timing because extra time will be required to tweak the system to work and some time may be needed to add information on the student union website about the new button/link on the intranet existing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure identification of impact areas</li> <li>- Find out any policies, regulations to linking to other places within the university</li> <li>- Check compatibility issues</li> <li>- Extensive testing</li> </ul>	<b>4</b>

**Overall Recommendations:** Overall the majority of the risks are quite low and are mostly concerning the benefits the button/link would bring and if students will actually use it. Ensuring there is sufficient time and documentation as well as keeping in mind overall simplicity and ease of use will eliminate the majority of the risks. This combined with active promotion of the new button/link should effectively work.

### Project Cost

In general there is very low / next to nothing (free) cost involved in the free implementation option of this project because:

- The final year student would be spending this time regardless of what project they work on ~400 hours
- The supervisor aligned to this project would have allocated time towards supervision of a final year project anyway
- The only considerations may be some minor costs when asking time from the student union to assist minor aspects such as the link up

#### Assumptions – Costs:

- ~ £30 will be need to update the information (under the current updates/information section) every month at most (likely to be every 2-3 months) – for each school participating
- Minimal change requests after the end of the project may cost around ~£30 a year
- ~£60 will be needed at the start of every year after the initial project to ensure all the student rep details are updated (name, photo, email) etc.

References used for pricing:

Costing prices have assumed that a student will be hired through the JobShop to complete activities listed under assumptions who will be paid at £7.20 p/h + holiday pay and occur the JobShop fee of £1.50p/h – costing a total of £9.60 p/h the student is needed for

- <http://www.cardiffstudents.com/jobs-skills/jobshop/employers/>

Personnel:
➤ Final Year Student – £0p/h £0 x 1 Person x 400 hours = £0
➤ Final Year Supervisor - £0p/h £0 x 1 Person x 18 hours = £0
➤ Job Shop Student (after project completion) – £9.60p/h £9.60 x 1 Person x 24 hours (a year) = £230

### Project Timescale

For this project I have estimated it will take 8 weeks if completed with no contingency time used or delays (however this is unlikely because a final year project student will have coursework and a least one module to still work on as well as the Easter break – the total time they have for this project would be 14 weeks (what all final year project students are given) and it is likely that they would fully utilise this entire time. Therefore the button/link would be fully working and implemented by May and would become usable mostly to students in the next academic year. However some students may use it during May/June if they have issues e.g. with their exam – the school could then evaluate this or use it as a way to test the button/link works before the start of the academic year.

Project timescale estimate:

- .Finding / promoting new ideas to schools within the university (1 week)
- Requirements from other interested schools (1 week)
- Design / information gathering for the content (2 weeks)
- Implementation (2 weeks)
- Testing (1 week)
- Installation and training of student coordinator (1 week)

## **Testing and Evaluation of Initial Recommendations**

Throughout this project I have aimed to test and gain feedback where relevant after each recommendation or proposal. When conducting questionnaires I ensured to collect demographic information which could be used to judge whether results were representative of that population and also carried out some statistical analysis to ensure the sample of data was viable. This helped to ensure that the results gathered could be used effectively to propose recommendations and proposals that were relevant to the entire student cohort and not just individuals.

Some recommendations such as having a Drop Box have been tested by using another person's historic figures to decide if it will be effective or not; for example this was carried out by contacting a student rep in the school of engineering who have a drop box and finding out its effectiveness through them (see email in appendix). Ideas implemented during this project were tested for effectiveness by comparing the changes because of the recommendation – for example the anonymous survey brought forward more responses than previous methods to collect feedback. The noticeboard has been tested by comparing it to best practices and due to this a new set of recommendations for the whereabouts of the notice board has been suggested.

Further testing I would like to conduct include holding a focus group regarding the student intranet button and new rep election process to further refine and improve the ideas. As well as this it would be useful to perform a Heuristic Evaluation once a mock up or wire frame of the student intranet button is ready – this will help gauge usability problems in the user interface design and will involve students testing how easy/long a generic task or activity such as 'find out who your rep is' takes to complete. Testing of the recommendations related to student staff panel meetings could be tested by just having a short feedback session after the meeting by asking members how they feel about the changes and collating their responses – this can be done a few times to ensure continuous improvement for the panel meetings.

## **Overall Recommendations**

These the main overall recommendations (this is not an exhaustive list and sub recommendations or further details can be found in the relevant sections of this project above).

<b>Recommendation</b>		<b>Objectives Mapped to</b>
<b>Awareness and Increased</b>	Student Reps to be more hands on (increased face to face contact with students)	Objective 3 - Increasing ways and that students can voice their concerns and use the service (providing higher engagement with students)
	Order and provide a drop box for students to leave feedback	Objective 3 - Increasing ways and that students can voice their concerns and use the service (providing higher engagement with students)
	Use anonymous survey links to collect feedback (can be posted on Facebook or sent via email)	

		Objective 3.1 - Create an anonymous method that students can use if they wish
	Move the notice board about student reps to the main corridor by the computer science reception	Objective 1 - Ensuring the student cohort know who their student reps are for the course/year and how to contact or reach out to them for help
	Take forwards the student rep intranet button to University IT services and get it implemented	Objective 1 - Ensuring the student cohort know who their student reps are for the course/year and how to contact or reach out to them for help Objective 6 - Create overall structure to the Student Rep system and general understanding by putting into place standardised processes
	Sending out a brief email about changes happening, issues discussed and work that is still in the pipeline every few months	Objective 4 - Provide a communication method to highlighting current issues and problems so students with the same problem can voice their opinions or be kept up to date with the progress Objective 5 - Ways to promote and communicate what changes/solutions have happened because of the student rep service other than Facebook
	A condensed format of the minutes that can be achieved and accessed or emailed to staff and students	Objective 5 - Ways to promote and communicate what changes/solutions have happened because of the student rep service other than Facebook
<b>Student Rep Election Recommendations</b>	Use proposal 1 or 2 to have a standardised election process for student reps	Objective 2 - Designing a standardised process to become a student rep and how it works Objective 6 - Create overall structure to the Student Rep system and general understanding by putting into place standardised processes
	Highlight benefits of becoming a student rep to students (create leaflet etc. that can be handed out in initial student rep talk at the start of the year)	Objective 6 - Create overall structure to the Student Rep system and general understanding by putting into place standardised processes
	Collect student rep pictures as part of the election process	Objective 1 - Ensuring the student cohort know who their student reps are for the course/year and how to contact or reach out to them for help Objective 7 - Overall minor improvements that as a whole will add up to making the service and experience for students better
<b>Student</b>	Create an actionable agenda	Objective 7 - Overall minor improvements that as a whole will add up
	Assign key meeting roles – specifically having a timekeeper	

	A lot time for topics in the meeting	to making the service and experience for students better
	Create a visual record used in meetings	
	High status members in the panel offer their options last	
	Create a year group student panel that can meet with the coordinator and some staff representatives from that year e.g. head of year every month to deal/tackle smaller issues quicker and save larger issues for the main student staff panel	Objective 3 - Increasing ways and that students can voice their concerns and use the service (providing higher engagement with students) Objective 7 - Overall minor improvements that as a whole will add up to making the service and experience for students better

## **Future Work:**

**Take forwards Business Case of Including a student rep button on the Intranet to University IT Services:** Although significant work has been made towards the inclusion of a student rep button on the School Intranet, due to university regulations and time constraints this is something that still needs to be continued by contacting University IT Services and providing a Business Case as well as other general discussions in order for it to be fully implemented.

**Further work on SSP Meeting improvements using McGregor Principles and Hall's Principles to achieve most efficient meetings in terms of time and quality:** Recommendations have been provided to improve the student staff panel meeting however the focus of the project objective shifted between the initial report and the final report and this is an area that can still be refined and looked into with greater depth – even including some of the recommendations in the meeting itself and then looking at what worked well and what didn't to have continuous improvement.

**Create an online archive system that stores previous student staff panel minutes and includes a filter system that staff can use to find topics relevant to them or an automatic email of content to what staff member it concerns:** In the initial staff questionnaire (section B) it was mentioned that an 'archive system' for minutes and results of the student staff panel would be good. Other comments included '[filtering] out relevant ones to me' and 'I only sometimes get emails that concern me'. Linking this to the fact that the questionnaire indicated the majority of staff wanted to receive the minutes after the panel makes this a viable idea to work on.

## **Challenges Faced:**

One of the main challenges I face was acquiring responses from external parties - the substantial amount of different types of information I needed to obtain from a



number of different stakeholders of reasonable sample sizes proved difficult to do in a timely manner. Several staff I held correspondence with in the university could take up to 2 weeks at a time to respond to my emails or agree to meet up due to other responsibilities. As well as this, particular events such as the Student Staff Panel only happen a few times a year and it was essential that I reached a particular stage in my project by this date in order to make observation of the panel useful. I did a lot of chasing in order to ensure that I had sufficient sample results from all my initial questionnaires to ensure I had viable results by the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of my project.

Another challenge has been that even staff members themselves are unclear about what processes there are or what particular avenues to use in order to reach an outcome e.g. how to find out who student rep coordinators are for different schools within Cardiff University or how to implement a proposal I had. This often meant I had to chase potential contacts or utilise my own personal contacts in order to obtain the information I required to move ahead with the project. Several roadblocks were also hit when proposing the recommendation to have a student rep button on the school intranet page because it impacted the entire university and this took a lot of time finding out how to achieve this proposal and get it implemented.

Something I have found challenging was to write this report from more of a third person perspective, especially because I spent so much time engaging and communicating with people it was hard to remove myself from the equation when recounting events or conversations and this has consumed a great deal of time at the end of my project when I realised I had written the majority in first person.

## **Reflection:**

Before starting this project I had decided that I really wanted to work on something that would improve people's everyday lives and this project was one of the projects I was immediately attracted to because it will help impact 100's of students' lives within our school for several years to come positively by essentially helping them 'have a voice'.

One of the most important aspects I have learnt during this project has been to catalogue and keep evidence of all the research I have carried out and the responses and correspondence people have given to help add richness to my project but also to allow easy access when needed to provide justification of my decisions and recommendations.

Due to personal extenuating circumstances that happened during the course of my project taking up almost 8 weeks it was essential that I kept to strict timekeeping measures once I returned to university in May in order to complete a project of value but also ensure I focused and set aside time for my two exams in May. It became almost essential that I attempted to do at least 70 hours more work before my first exam and at least 70 hours after my last exam causing a very high pressure situation which in the future I will definitely endeavour to avoid. I am lucky to have worked more on my project than needed in the initial stages and conducted nearly all my background research before the time plan went completely off track and I believe this has been a critical aspect in allowing me to complete this project before the viva date and without having to take so much extra time as to cause graduate next year. My

work pattern after the circumstances consisted of 10-12 hours a day which ended up working well for me as I was able to produce and complete large chunks of work which I could discuss with my supervisor on what turned into 2+ weekly meetings a week. A lesson I have learnt from this would be that when possible to achieve more, to do so and work ahead of schedule so that if other commitments or unavoidable issues happen the end result can still be met in a reasonably timely manner.

Some core skills I have picked up during the course of this project include deciding the best way to represent information and how to best justify my decisions and recommendations. I also learnt a lot of the university's processes for bringing about change – the channels and individuals you have to meet with in order for any proposals to happen. I spent a lot of time communicating with all sorts of stakeholders at the beginning of the project and then evaluating what information was given to me to see how everything fit into the bigger picture. I learnt to apply a lot of these perspectives through the use of SSM Models and learnt how to apply this to a real situation. Overall I am pleased that I have been able to utilise many of the modules I have learnt over the course of my 3 years at university such as Knowledge Management, Business Problem Solving, Project Change Management, Human Computer Interaction, Professional Skills and Systems Thinking. Due to utilising a lot of methods predominantly found on the Business Information Systems (BIS) course I have aimed to ensure that my methods were explained as fully as possible in a way that was understandable for a reader with limited knowledge about BIS.

I am confident that my ideas and proposals will greatly benefit the student rep system and that many of the future work ideas may even form other potential final year projects due to the depth of work and research required to effectively action them. I am pleased with my project outcome and I am happy to develop something of value to the university that has partially been implemented or is pending implementation almost immediately (ready for the academic year 2016/2017).

## **Appendices & References:**

### **References:**

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## **Appendix:**

Some documents/larger files have been attached with the project on PATS under 'Other Files'

### Engineering Student Rep Email regarding Drop Box

**From:** Robert Spurvey  
**Sent:** 04 May 2016 09:31  
**To:** Susan Cammiade  
**Cc:** Alan Kwan; Adrian Porch  
**Subject:** Re: Student Rep Query

Hi Susan,

I hope this isn't too late.

1) There were a few students either selected by members of staff or who had nominated themselves for a student rep post. We then write a short paragraph of why we should do the job. Then this was voted for by the other students. That year was a first though before only one person would put themselves forward and so automatically became the rep. Something I hope will never happen again.

2) The dropbox/suggestion box has worked people are using it. The take up was slow to begin with but now it's being used often. So I think the box was a good investment, well yes because it's another way for students to voice their opinions. Something which in the past they may have had but wasn't presented in such a way.

Best of luck with your final year project.

Kind Regards

### Student Union Representative Correspondence:



Tom Spare

23/05/2016

Susan Cammiade; Helen Phillips ▾



🔄 Reply all | ▾

Inbox

Hi Susan,

Apologies for not getting back sooner I was away at the end of last week.

I can look into a student rep button but that is something that is out of control because the intranet is operated by the University IT services.

We can have a drop box and rep information backing board designed and made for you as well.

In terms of elections. We can run elections off our website. There needs to be a timeframe for nominations to be open – students can either submit their nomination (photo, manifesto) via our website or Helen can create an application form asking for that information. We know how many posts need to be elected and if only a specific students can vote. Usually we open elections for 5-7 days, students vote via our website when they login.

All the best

Tom

## Cardiff University Website Error Message:

EXPLORE CARDIFF UNIVERSITY HOME ABOUT EDUCATION RESEARCH NEWS EVENTS A-Z

**CARDIFF UNIVERSITY**  
PRIFYSGOL CAERDYDD

**Student Voice**

**Cardiff University Students' Union**  
Undeb Myfyrwyr Prifysgol Caerdydd

Student Academic Reps External Examiner Reports Contact my Rep

**Student Academic Reps**

I am a Student

I am a Student Academic Rep

I am a Student Rep Co-ordinator

**External Examiner Reports**

**Not Found**

Sorry, but you are looking for something that isn't here.  
Please use the menu to select another page

## Calculation of Standard Deviation:

Handwritten calculation of standard deviation on a piece of paper. The paper has columns labeled 'mark', 'mean', 'sq', 'p', and 'freq'. The calculations are as follows:

mark	mean	sq	p	freq
8	5.78	$(8 - 5.78)^2 = 4.93$	7	34.51
7	5.78	$(7 - 5.78)^2 = 1.49$	3	4.47
6	5.78	$(6 - 5.78)^2 = 0.05$	5	0.25
5	5.78	$(5 - 5.78)^2 = 0.61$	6	3.66
4	5.78	$(4 - 5.78)^2 = 3.17$	3	9.51
3	5.78	$(3 - 5.78)^2 = 7.73$	2	15.46
1	5.78	$(1 - 5.78)^2 = 22.85$	1	22.85
				90.71 / 27
				= 3.36