



THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH

Enhancing student rep experience on College committees

What's next for Student Voice representation and impact

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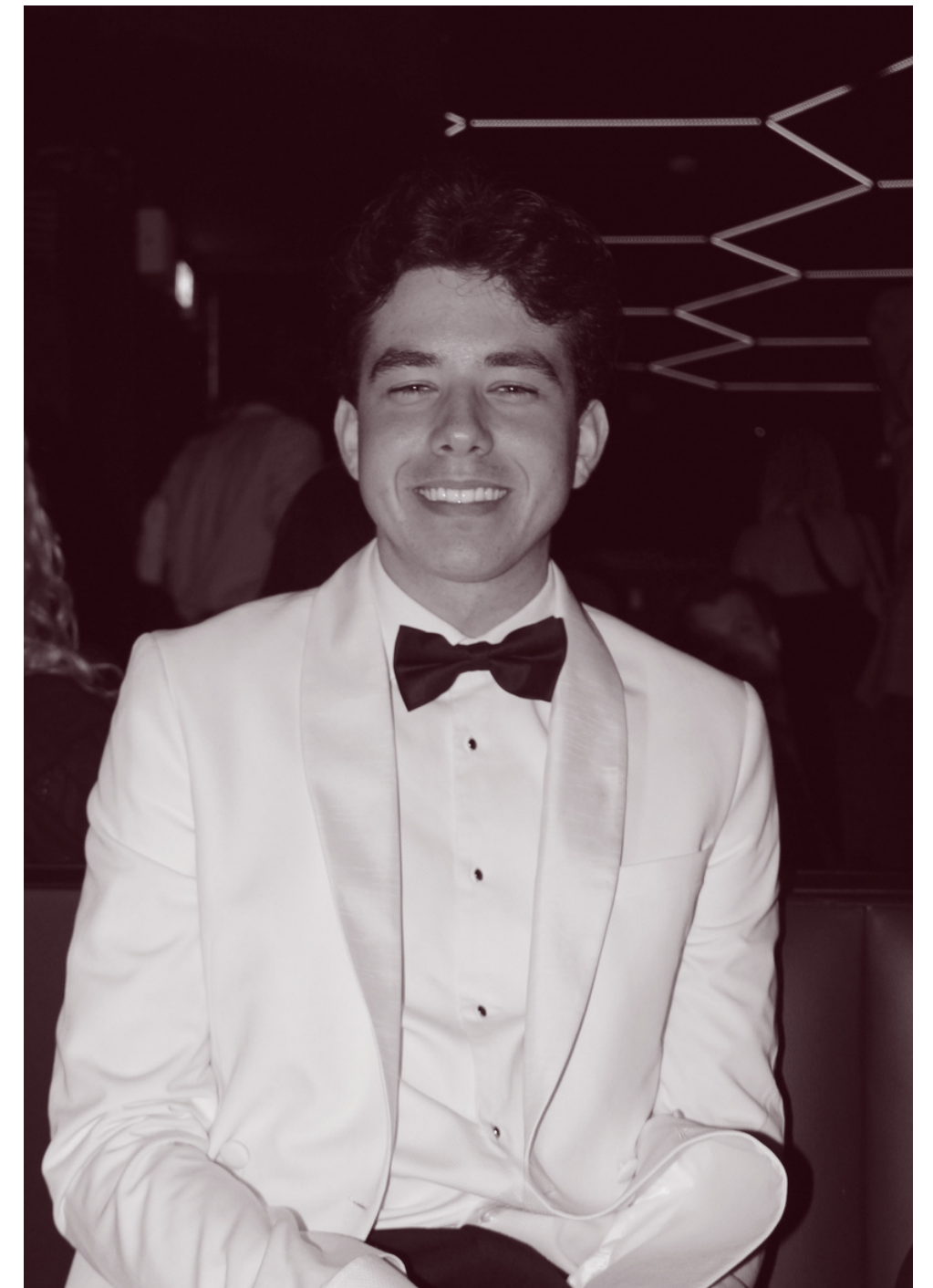
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Giving voice to our student representatives



Shirley Tian

HCA School Student Representative;
Internationalisation and Global
Partnerships Committee rep 2024-25;
Member of College working group on
joint degree experience.



James Andrew

SPS School Student Representative;
Member of College WP Network;
Member of College working group on
Assessment Tariffs.



Student representation in CAHSS

CAHSS committee structure includes a wide range of College committees, working groups, and strategic discussion forums.

Student reps are recruited from across Schools and programmes to contribute student perspectives at College level.

Existing strengths

- Strong commitment to student partnership
- Established representative structures and processes
- Engaged student reps and conveners

However...

Support and onboarding experiences could vary significantly between committees.

Student reps told us that committee participation can involve:

- Additional workload alongside existing commitments
- Navigating complex governance structures and jargon
- Uncertainty about expectations and confidence in contributing
- Difficulty seeing the impact of their input

Our ambition

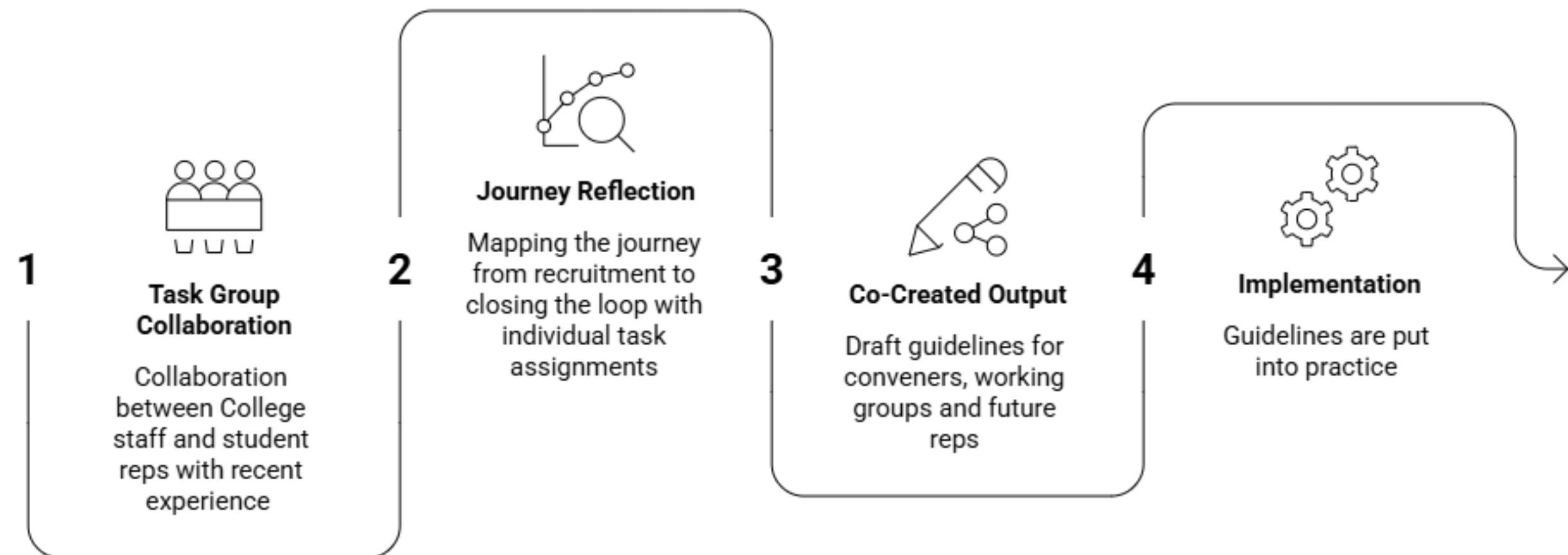
We want College committees to be spaces where student representatives:

- Feel welcomed and supported
- Understand how they can contribute
- Can confidently raise student concerns
- Influence discussions and decisions meaningfully

This project aims to create:

- More consistency
- Clearer guidance
- And a more supportive student rep journey

Project tools and journey

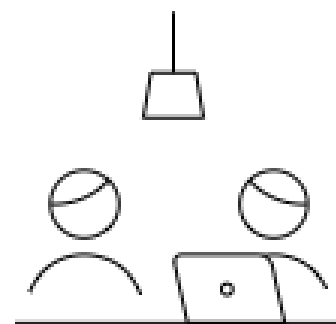


Our approach

- Considers a before-during-after timeline to address the whole student rep journey, from recruitment and onboarding to handover.
- Guidelines being drafted for target audiences to clarify roles and expectations.

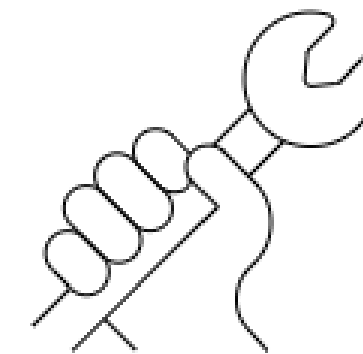
Student Co-created

Starting with challenges identified directly by those in the role and identifying emerging themes



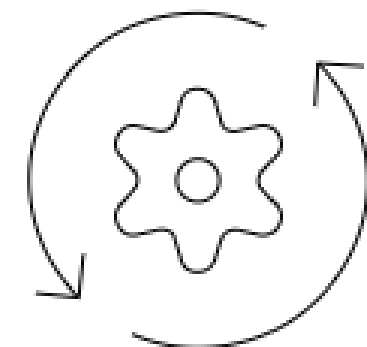
Low Resourced and Solution Oriented

Focusing on intentional mitigation and practical steps rather than structural overhaul



Continuous

Adopting on-ongoing enhancement to improve the experience immediately and allowing incremental refinement



Before the meeting

Challenge

Preparation and inclusion in meetings: students felt uncertain about expectations, committee culture, and how to prepare to contribute effectively.

Mitigation

Introductory sessions between reps, conveners, and support staff to build trust. Clear communications of expectations on time and commitment, what the role involves.

‘The most useful conversations I had were not in formal meetings but in one-to-one discussions. Meeting a convener before a committee builds trust, clarifies expectations, and helps reps feel prepared. It also humanises the process, turning committees from intimidating forums into spaces of collaboration’ - James

During the meeting

Challenge

Enabling meaningful contributions: students struggled to enter discussion confidently, follow conversations and feel their contributions were valued.

Mitigation

Conveners were encouraged to summarise discussions clearly, actively invite student input, minimise jargon, and ensure students were not left behind in discussion.

‘Student committee reps feel valued when they are actively included in discussions and are well-informed about the agenda topics on the papers, are given enough support and time to voice their opinions and concerns’ - Shirley

After the meeting

Challenge

Sustaining engagement:
Engagement could diminish after meetings, especially when actions were unclear or students missed meetings/discussions.

Mitigation

Post-meeting check-in emails to encourage reflection, clarify outcomes, invite additional questions and identify student-related actions. Maintained communication throughout the year.

‘I felt I was able to raise things in the meeting and felt adequately prepared (receiving notice of the documents beforehand was helpful), and Jenny has been very welcoming and spent time with us catching up after the meeting, and offering her continued support should we have questions or what to raise things in future, which was great. Looking forward to the next one!’ - Clair

- Small interventions matter: simple actions significantly improve confidence, engagement and participation levels.
- Relationships are central: students engage more meaningfully when they feel personally welcomed and supported.
- Intentional facilitation: representation alone is not enough. Students need structures that enable effective participation.
- Continuous improvement: this work can evolve iteratively through yearly reviews, evaluation, student feedback and shared practice across committees.





Students speaking to students

‘Working in student representation is not just about feedback, it is also about influence’

‘Effective contribution come from preparation and confidence over time’

‘Treat the role as a professional development opportunity, not just as a committee position’

‘Don’t try to do the role on your own’

‘If you don’t understand the jargon, ask about it - that’s a problem with the system, not with you’

‘The conversations outside meetings are often the most useful ones’

What's next?

Sustaining vs Scaling our approach

Discussion questions

- Can this approach be replicated across the wider University?
- If so, how can we take practical steps to sustain alignment of resources?
- How do we better support the entire student rep journey?
- How can impact be measured over time?

Opportunities

- Shared guidance and training
- More consistent on boarding of reps onto Committees
- Better recognition of student rep contributions
- Cyclical review and improvement processes

Thank you!



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[CAHSS Committee Reps SharePoint](#)