COURSE REP HANDBOOK





HELLO FROM JMSU AND LJMU

LILA TAMEA, VICE PRESIDENT (ACADEMIC QUALITY) AT JMSU

Hey there! My name is Lila and I'm one of your Student Officers for 2019/2020. We were elected by you, for you, in our March 2019 elections and now I'm here to make sure you get the best experience out of your degree. As Vice President (Academic Quality), I attend all the important University committees to ensure that the university knows what LJMU students need from their education. But, I cannot do any of that on my own, which is why I need you!

First of all, I just want to say thank you for giving your time in helping us improve the student experience, and me to be the best representative I can be for all LJMU students. I, too, was a Course Rep throughout my time doing my degree, so I know how much of an impact you can make as a student leader. The University and JMSU deeply value you as a representative for your course and we want to support you throughout the year. The feedback you and our Academic Interest Reps provide is invaluable and it directly shapes the day-to-day academic practice. We hope you will find your experience as a Course Rep enjoyable and you will learn transferable skills, such as communication and negotiation that will further develop you as an individual. Remember, you are the voice for your course. You are the one who can make a change by encouraging your peers to fill in the Module Evaluation Survey and by representing your course mates at Board of Study meetings. Thank you once again for taking part and have a good year!

BEING A COURSE REP

A Course Rep is a student who volunteers their time to work with JMSU and LJMU, for all LJMU students. Through their role, they help the university to ensure the student experience is the best it can be. The Course Rep role is vital as it allows students to communicate their views openly to a member of their course; Course Reps ensure the student voice is not only heard, but acted on as well.

We suggest that at least 1 hour a week (or 4 hours per month) is required for this role. You can make this hour up by:

- → Promoting your role in lectures/seminars, so students know who you are and how to contact you
- → Collect feedback, either in person or over email/text/social media
- → Entering your feedback into the JMSU Student Feedback Tool, so that we can ensure we effectively represent you across the University
- → Attending a Board of Study, a JMSU workshop or an Academic Interest Forum
- → Meeting with LJMU staff, to talk about the student feedback you have received

So, what will you get out of being a course rep?

- → An opportunity to change things on your course
- → Leadership skills
- → Advocacy skills (Acting on behalf of someone else)
- → Public speaking skills
- → Communication and teamwork skills
- → Negotiation and influencing skills
- → The experience will be documented in the HEAR (Higher Education Achievement Record) - which is a pretty big deal. It's basically a record of all the extra curricular stuff you've been involved in, so it's something you can take to interviews to evidence all the boss things you've done as a student!
- → It makes you way more employable!
- → So much more!

Here is an example of a paragraph you could use in a future application about being a Course Rep, based on the experience of attending this workshop. Clearly, these are just starting points and you can tailor and add to them.

"Whilst at university I was chosen as a Course Rep for my course. This was an incredible opportunity, and I developed some key skills that I can apply to this position. The role included attending workshops, which allowed me to develop team working and communication skills, as well as influencing and negotiation. These workshops included group discussions, where I played an active role in expressing my own opinion as well as listening and responding to the opinions of others."



PROF PETER BYERS, PRO VICE CHANCELLOR (EDUCATION) AT LJMU

Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU) is committed to working in partnership with the student body, and this is most effectively expressed in our 'Principles of Partnership' statement. This document has been co-created by staff and students working through the Student Engagement Panel and John Moores Students' Union [JMSU]. The partnership statement is composed of nine principles, and these express how students, staff and JMSU can work together to strengthen our community.

Partnership working expresses itself in many ways, and an extremely impactful expression of our intent is the Course Rep System. This scheme is effective because the University and JMSU work together on its implementation. The Student Rep role is important because it provides a valuable mechanism for students to provide feedback on their experience. Students provide this feedback through formal structures – such as Committee meetings – but also through informal approaches – for example, by speaking directly to staff. The Student Reps are closely associated with the Students' Union, where training and support are provided, as well as opportunities to feedback on their experience.

The impact of the Student Rep system is manifold. For example, it provides development opportunities for individual Student Reps, which, of course, may prove useful in later life. Importantly, the Student Rep system helps the Institution and JMSU to better understand the wider student experience, and this subsequently allows the Institution and Student's Union to enhance this experience. Thus, your role enhances not just your own experience, but also that of your fellow students – and subsequent students.

Can I thank you on behalf of LJMU for participating in the Student Rep system. This is an important activity, and your participation does make a difference. Thank you.

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Psst! If you only have 5 minutes, here are the top things you should know!

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BLOSSARY OF TERMS

Academic Interest Reps: Academic Interest Reps work alongside Course Reps within their faculty to ensure that JMSU is effectively representing LJMU students' academic interests. Through their role, they identify issues that are affecting the whole faculty, and not just individual courses.

Board of Study: This is a formal LJMU meeting, that Course Reps have to attend two times a year to report students feedback back to relevant LJMU staff.

Student Feedback Tool: 24/7 reporting tool for students to give feedback about their university experience, that can be found on JMSU's website.

Student Officer: We're led by a team of Student Officers who are voted in by students each spring. Your Officers have all recently been LJMU students and their role is to lead campaigns that are relevant to you, direct all of our work and represent your views to the University, across Liverpool and nationally. Each Officer looks after a different aspect of student life, so it's all covered. The four roles are President, Vice President (Academic Quality), Vice President (Community Engagement) and Vice President (Activities).

NSS: The National Student Survey. A survey that gathers opinions from students about their time in Higher Education, asking them to provide feedback about what it has been like to study on their course, at their institution. The results are made available publicly, to help prospective students make decisions about where they want to study.

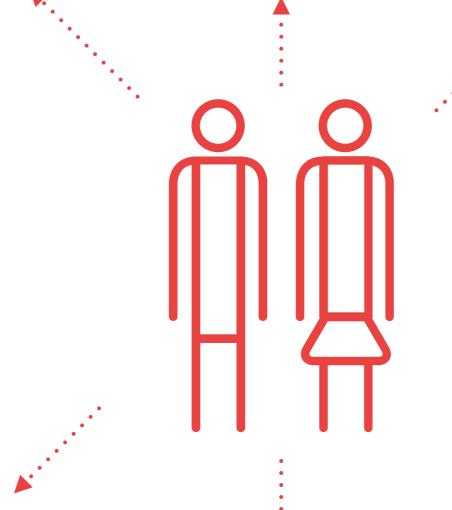
A BIT ABOUT THE ROLE

A Course Rep is a student who volunteers their time to work with JMSU and LJMU, for all LJMU students. Through their role, they help the university to ensure the student experience is the best it can be. The Course Rep role is vital as it allows students to communicate their views openly to a member of their course; Course Reps ensure the student voice is not only heard, but acted on as well. The role is very influential and can help create positive change.

Course Reps provide an essential link between students and the University.

Course Reps create positive change helping shape their course, communicate concerns and celebrate academic excellence.

Course Reps attend formal
LJMU meetings, to represent
students' views, and have a say
on decisions that affect
students.



Course Reps interact with students to collect feedback on what they like and what they would improve their experience at LJMU.

Course Reps tell students what decisions are made by LJMU and why.

of JMSU and LJMU. They work with Student Officers and staff to ensure the student voice is not only heard, but acted on as well.

BEING A COURSE REP IS A GREAT EXPERIENCE FOR YOU!

In your role, you will get to:

- Make positive change for students
- Be an ambassador for JMSU and LJMU
- Network with other Course Reps and senior members of LJMU staff
- Develop strong problem solving skills and become confident in presenting
- Become more employable once you graduate

We suggest that at least 1 hour a week (or 4 hours per month) is required for this role. You can make this hour up by:

- Promoting your role in lectures/seminars, so students know who you are and how to contact you
- Collect feedback, either in person or over email/text/social media
- Entering your feedback into the JMSU Student Feedback Tool, so that we can ensure we effectively represent you across the University
- Attending a Board of Study, a JMSU workshop or an Academic Interest Forum
- Meeting with LJMU staff, to talk about the student feedback you have received
- Checking the information on our Student Rep Resource Hub

We will not be policing the time you spend, but we are keen to understand what you are doing in the role. Remember to track your activity via our <u>Student Rep Resource Hub</u>, to let us know what progress you have made. This could be something as small as arranging a meeting with students to get feedback, or meeting with an LJMU staff member to discuss how to improve your course.

STUDENT FEEDBACK

A big part of the Course Rep role includes collecting feedback from students and taking it to the right place, so it can be acted upon. The information below gives you some ideas of how, when and where you could collect feedback.

HOW TO COLLECT FEEDBACK

It is important students know who you are and how and then they can talk to you.

Some good ways to do this are:

IN LECTURES

You will usually see other students in your lectures and seminars. This is a good opportunity to promote your role to them. We have developed a PowerPoint slide, which can be downloaded on our <u>website</u> in the Course Rep resource section to help you do this. When you have entered your name, contact details and any other information on where students can find you to chat, send the slide to your lecturer or take it in with a memory stick and ask them to show it to students, so you can introduce yourself.

FACEBOOK

If you do not already have one, set up a Facebook page for your programme and invite everyone on your course. Here, you can ask students to message you with any feedback that they have. You could even make a video to help promote yourself! The resources on our website will give you support to be able to do this.

CANVAS

All students will have to use Canvas to access information on their modules, so this is a great place to reach them. You can ask your Programme Leader to help you create a profile on Canvas and invite people to a discussion board to discuss the quality of your course and how it can be improved.

EMAIL

You can also ask your lecturer to send out an email with your contact details to all students on your course.

WHEN TO COLLECT FEEDBACK

A key time to collect feedback is a week before the Board of Study meetings or Academic Interest forums that happen once every semester (and do not forget to feedback after too!) – so that you have lots of information to speak about whilst you are there.

Below are a few ideas of how you can do this:

- Ask your lecturer for five minutes at the start or end of a lecture, you can use this time to update students on what has been happening, or ask them to give you feedback.
- Encourage students to fill in their module evaluation surveys, as these are a key way for LJMU to act on collective student feedback these happen twice a year, once at the end of November and once at the end of March. LJMU will share the results with you, so that you can help them find solutions to any problems that arise from them.
- Set up a 'drop in' time in the library or social space so that students can come and visit you, to talk about the things that they want you to take forward

WHERE TO TAKE YOUR FEEDBACK

Where you take your feedback depends on the kind of information that you receive. The first place to start is to determine which category your feedback falls into.

Generally, this will be one of four areas:

- Course matter
- Faculty matter
- University wide matter
- Individual matter

When you have determined which category your feedback falls into, you can then decide who to take your feedback to.

These are some of the places that feedback would typically go:

Your Module or Programme Leader

If it is a course matter, the best place to take it to start with is either the module leader, if it is specific to a certain module, or your Programme Leader, if it is a matter that affects more than one module.

A Board of Study

Your Module or Programme Leader should advise if the issue you bring needs to be formally discussed at a Board of Study. Remember, you do not always need to wait for a formal opportunity, such as the Board of Study meetings, and if you can resolve it informally first, it will be much easier and much guicker!

Your Academic Interest Rep

If it is a faculty matter, the best place to take it to start with is the Academic Interest Rep for your faculty. These reps sit on faculty level meetings, and meet with senior members of staff from your faculty – so they are able to take this feedback to the appropriate forum to be acted on.

Your Vice President (Academic Quality)

If it is a university wide matter, the best place to take it to start with is to your Vice President (Academic Quality). Julia sits on a number of high level LJMU committees, and she also regularly talks to very senior members of LJMU staff, such as the Pro Vice Chancellor (Education) and the Head of Institution (interim) – so she can take this feedback right to the top! Julia can also advise you on next steps, if you feel that you are not getting anywhere with raising course and faculty level matters.

JMSU Advice Service

If it is an individual matter, or a group complaint, the best place to start with is JMSU's Advice Service. Our professionally trained Advisors can help advise of support available, next steps and what complicated terminology means!

It can be really confusing deciding how to deal with matters and where they should go, so if you need support on where to take your feedback, or how to present it, so that is has the greatest impact, please get in touch with us at coursereps@ljmu.ac.uk.

HOW TO GIVE YOUR FEEDBACK

When giving feedback you must be accurate, balanced, constructive and de-personalised, remembering all four of these will result in you giving much more effective feedback and will make you a better representative.

- Accurate it has to not only be what students are saying collectively, but it has to be right. If you start stating things as fact and these are wrong it will immediately negatively impact what is probably a very good argument.
- Balanced recognising the good as well as the bad. Try opening the
 discussion with a good point about course/subject/LJMU and
 following it with the "issue" and then closing on a good point. It
 comes across as less "attacking" and makes the respondent much
 less defensive and more warming to the criticism.
- Constructive when raising issues, make sure they serve a useful purpose, offer solutions and remember that your main aim is to create positive change.
- Depersonalised remember to address the issues not attack the individuals. Nine times out of ten the University staff will want the things that are wrong to change just as much as you do. No one responds well to criticism that comes across as personal and as a result it will be much less effective.

MEETINGS TO ATTEND

BOARD OF STUDY MEETINGS

WHAT ARE THEY?

A fundamental part of being a Course Rep involves attending Board of Study meetings. These are formal meetings, held by the University. Each Board of Study is responsible for a defined group of academic programmes and reports to the LJMU Director of School.

AMONGST OTHER THINGS, AT A BOARD OF STUDY MEETING, YOU WILL:

- Deliver feedback from students on your programme, about their experience on your course
- Hear feedback from other Course Reps from all years of the programme(s)
- Find out how well your programme is doing in student recruitment, achievement and retention
- Consider outcomes from formal surveys, such as module evaluations and the NSS as appropriate
- Consider module and programme developments and proposed amendment
- Find out the outcome of proposed module and programme amendments
- Consider regular reports from staff/student liaison groups

They are arranged by your school/department, they occur twice a year, once in semester 1 (usually in October) and once in semester 2 (usually in February). To find out when your Boards of Study meeting will take place, please speak to your programme leader.

We know that many Course Reps end up missing the first Board of Study of the year, in October, because they have only just been elected or selected. If this is the case, don't worry – your Academic Interest Forum will happen in November, where you can also bring student feedback.

WHO ATTENDS?

The Board of Study consists of a number of LJMU staff, including your Programme Leader, who will chair the meeting and your Programme Administrator, who will act as secretary. Other LJMU staff who attend include all members of teaching staff associated with the programme and representatives from Library Services. At least one Course Rep from each year, should also be invited to attend. Each Board of Study must have, at least, the chair, secretary, one academic member of staff and one Course Rep present to be able to go ahead. If no Course Rep is able to attend, appropriate evidence should be available, which shows that students have been consulted and have had the opportunity to input into the meeting.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I DO NOT ATTEND?

If you cannot attend, then please ensure you send your apologies to the administrator that sent you the invite. Within your apologies, you can also send any electronic comments that you would like to be put forward or considered at the meeting. If you cannot attend, it is a good idea to speak to your fellow Course Reps on your programme and ask them if they are available to attend, to make sure someone will be there.

HOW DO I PREPARE FOR THE MEETING?

You should be sent an agenda and any papers ahead of the meeting, if you haven't been sent these, you should make sure that you ask your Programme Leader for a copy. Try to make time to read through the papers, but do not be put off if you cannot make any sense of them – they can seem very daunting and filled with acronyms and terminology! If you find the papers confusing – get in touch with JMSU at coursereps@ljmu.ac.uk and we will be here to help you.

If you have time, use the agenda to encourage students to make comment based on the items on the agenda. Also, feel free to raise items at the meeting that are not on the agenda too. LJMU are keen to know how you feel about your academic experience, so will be interested to know your thoughts. There will be set time for student feedback, but if you would like to add an item to the agenda to make sure sufficient time is put aside to discuss an issue, speak to your Programme Leader to have an item added before the meeting.

WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?

The chair of the meeting will go through all of the points covered on the agenda and ask if there are any comments that you would like to make on the points. Remember, you are an equal member of the meeting, and can input at any time – not just in the section for student feedback. Try to sit somewhere where the chair can easily see you, so if you want to speak, they can identify you easily. There will be a secretary taking notes during the meeting (these are called minutes) which records what has been said and any decisions that have been made. After the meeting, you will be sent these minutes, which you can check for accuracy and use to summarise to students what has been discussed. The minutes will include any actions that the university decide to take to make improvements to the programme. You should ask for some time in your lecture to relay this information back to students.

If you would like to know more about how to be effective at Board of Study meetings, we have a workshop dedicated to doing just that – you can find the dates and times for our Board of Study' workshops on the Student Rep Resource Hub, on our website.

MEETINGS TO ATTEND

ACADEMIC INTEREST FORUMS

The Academic Interest Forums happen once a semester, and they are a brand new way for you to tell us what you think about your academic experience and create policy to act upon.

Their purpose is to provide a forum that mobilises and engages both Course and Academic Interest Reps to become engaged with the work of the Students' Union and in turn for JMSU to gain student feedback, to ensure we are effectively representing students at the many LJMU committees we sit on.

WHO ATTENDS?

Academic Interest Forums are mostly attended by Course Reps, but are open to all students who wish to come – so please do bring your friends with you. JMSU Student Officers and Academic Interest Reps will also be in attendance, to lead the meeting and for you to be able to ask any questions you want to ask about the work that they have been doing. LJMU staff will also attend, where relevant to talk to you about key issues and answer any questions you may have..

WHAT HAPPENS IF I DO NOT ATTEND?

If you cannot attend, then please just let us know. You are also welcome to send any electronic comments that you would like to be put forward or considered at the meeting. If you cannot attend, it is a good idea to speak to your fellow Course Reps on your programme and ask them if they are available to attend, to make sure someone will be there.

HOW DO I PREPARE FOR THE FORUM?

The Forum is informal, so all you really need to do it turn up – however, it is a good idea to spend some time talking to students beforehand, so that you can bring feedback with you, if necessary.

MODULE EVALUATIONS

At the end of each semester, LJMU carry out module evaluations, which enable students to express their opinions of their learning experience at module level. It is a key indicator in how satisfied students are with their learning experience, and what issues may need to be addressed.

Module evaluations at LJMU have traditionally received a very low response rate, and we know anecdotally that this is often because students do not feel the results will be acted upon. However, when modules receive under a 50% response rate (which they often do), it means it is difficult for LJMU to be confident that the feedback received from them is representative and therefore valid – and as a result means the feedback often be dismissed.

JMSU and LJMU are hoping to change this with the help of Course Reps – we'd like you to not only make sure you fill in the module evaluations for your course, but also to ask your course mates to do the same.

There will be two module evaluations a year (one at the end of November and one at the end of March) and we highly encourage you to get your course mates to fill it in – remember, the higher the response rate, the more representative it is and the more likely it is to be acted upon! For the first time, results will be made available on Canvas for every student on the module to see, making it easier for you to discuss these later on with the module leader. We will also be asking and working with LJMU staff to make sure that they make time to meet with their Course Rep and discuss what the results have said and what the next steps will be.

Nearer the time, we will be providing briefings, workshops and resources to help you do this – so keep your eyes peeled and help us ensure that module evaluation feedback is not only listened to, but acted upon as well!

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

JMSU are committed to ensuring that students at LJMU receive the education they have been promised, with full access to the support and services that they need. To support this, we have an Advice Service which provides free and independent advice to all students of LJMU.

It is important that Course Reps have as much information as possible, to understand the support that is available and to be able to signpost students effectively. Below you will see the main processes that currently exist at LJMU, and what they can be used for.

Academic Appeal:

Students have the right to appeal if there has been an issue in the assessment process called a material irregularity. For example, if you did not receive the correct assessment, or your exam was not on your timetable. This can only be submitted after the formal notification of your results, and will require supporting evidence.

Deferred consideration:

Students have the right to request deferred consideration. This is when a known about event will affect your ability to undertake your assessments. For example surgery or jury service – independent evidence would be required. It cannot be used for a holiday during term time.

Personal Circumstances (formally Extenuating circumstances)

Students have the right to request consideration if they believe serious personal circumstances are affecting their ability to perform in assessment. Independent evidence is required to support the personal circumstances. The outcome of this, if accepted, would be a deferral on the assessment to the next time the assessment is conducted. Before the formal non-attempt and special mitigation process, students have the right to ask the module leader for an extension up to 15 working days.

• Hearings and Panels:

Students have the right to advice and representation at any panel or hearing they are called to by LJMU. This could happen for any number of reasons, for example if they have been accused of academic misconduct, fitness to practice, a student disciplinary or if they have any criminal convictions that need to be investigated.

Special Mitigation:

Students have the right to use the special mitigation process, if they become ill, or another unexpected event happens during an exam. It is important that the student speaks to one of the invigilators so that the issue can be formally recorded. in extreme circumstances, the university reserves the right to apply Special Mitigation following a student's attempt at any assessment item. In extreme circumstances, the university reserves the right to apply Special Mitigation following a student's attempt at any assessment item.

Student Complaints:

Students have the right to complain about the service you receive at LJMU and how you are treated by the university. There are different levels of complaint, and depending what it involves, depends who it would go to. It is best to seek advice and guidance on how to submit a complaint.

If you have students approach you with an individual matter, such as needing to use one of the processes mentioned above, please signpost them to JMSU Advice Service. It is important that you never offer students advice yourself, and no one should expect this of you. Please note that some of these processes have strict time limits, so remember to let students know that it is best to contact us as soon as possible after they are notified or an issue occurs.

Students can contact the Advice Service at JMSUadvice@ljmu.ac.uk, or they can book an appointment online at www.advicesu.simplybook.it/v2/

If you would like to learn more about student rights at LJMU, we have a workshop dedicated to doing just that – you can find the dates and times for our 'Know Your Rights' workshops on the Student Rep Resource Hub, on our website.

SUPPORT FROM JMSU

JMSU are committed to ensuring that all Course Reps feel supported and valued in their role. We have a Student Officer and a full time staff member, dedicated to helping and supporting you to be the best you can be.

Information about this support, including dates of workshops and events, is available on the Student Rep Resource Hub on our website. Here you will also find a number of downloadable resources that will help you day to day in your role

This year for further support, we have also organised Coffee, Cakes and Change Things events that happen each month in the social spaces. These are drop in style events that will take where you can come and ask any questions that you have, acquire support from each other, discuss topics relevant to that month, or just chat.

These will take place as follows:

- Byrom Street social space: first Tuesday of every month
- IM Marsh social space: second Tuesday of every month
- Redmonds social space: third Tuesday of every month
- Tithebarn social space: <u>fourth</u> Tuesday of every month

We are here to help you with whatever you need, and no question is too silly, so please feel free to contact us for any questions that you have about being a Course Rep and any other opportunities that we offer at coursereps@ljmu.ac.uk

REWARD & RECOGNITION

We want to make sure that you feel rewarded and recognised for your hard work and dedication as a Course Rep. Below you can read more about the main ways that we do this.

Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR)

To recognise your dedication and commitment to the role, we are also part of the HEAR (Higher Education Achievement Report) scheme. This report is a record of your achievements throughout university that includes academic work, extracurricular activities and voluntary work. Being a Course Rep falls under voluntary work, so when you finish university this experience will be added to your degree transcript.

JMSU will have a record of each of these items; if you meet the eligibility criteria we will get in contact at the end of the year, to ensure your work as a Course Rep is recognised on your degree transcript.

You're Amazing Monthly Winners

At the end of every month, we recognise one Course Rep per faculty for the work they have done, as provided by the 'tracking your activity' function. Each winner will receive a shopping voucher or cinema tickets as thanks for their work, and be celebrated via social media.

You're Amazing Awards Night

Every year JMSU hosts annual awards, known as 'You're Amazing', where you can get dressed up, network with senior LJMU staff and meet other Student Reps, whilst being recognised for the work you have carried out throughout the year.

Course rep	Course rep with silver level award
- Register as a course rep	- Register as a course rep
- Complete JMSU Course Rep induction training. At a minimum this would be our online training.	- Complete JMSU Course Rep induction training. At a minimum this would be our
	online training.
	- Attend at least one Board of Studies meeting
-Attend at least one Board of Studies meeting	- Attend at least one Academic Interest Forum
- Spend approximately 25 hours over the course of the academic year on course rep duties.	- Attend at least one further JMSU training session
	- Create one positive change for students (if you are not sure what this could be
	come talk to us)
	- Spend approximately 25 hours over the course of the academic year on course rep
	duties

CLOSING REMARKS

Thank you for reading the JMSU Course Rep Handbook, we hope this has helped you understand what the role is all about and helped you to be effective within it.

If you have any more questions related to being a Course Rep, please feel free to speak to our Vice President (Academic Quality) Lila Tamea vpacademic@ljmu.ac.uk or come to our additional workshops and events.

We want you to have the best experience possible as a Course Rep, so always let us know if you need some further support, by getting in contact at coursereps@ljmu.ac.uk.