Unitu Guide

Online student voice platform

Students' Union

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What is Unitu?

Unitu is an online student voice platform designed to give a safe space for students, reps and staff members to share constructive feedback, amplify good practice through praise, ask a burning question or bring along a bright idea in regards to academic and more broad university experiences.
Unitu supports students in asking the University to respond to and act upon feedback in real time – why? Well because everyone wants UCLan to be the experience of a lifetime in a positive way.

How it works...

1. Students are auto-enrolled onto Unitu

2. Everyone has access to to the discussion boards. There will be one for the School and another as a general university board.

3. Each discussion board is split into two:
The private section – this section is not accessible by University staff! In this area, students can ask questions,

post ideas, give praise and raise constructive feedback. If the Academic Representatives/SU staff feel this is a constructive post then, it will be moved into the public section.

The public section – this section is accessible by University staff so that they can provide a response.

Important information

All students have the option to post anonymously, this means that Representatives and University Staff cannot identify them. However it is important that everyone understands that Unitu is a safe space for everyone involved – that includes students, reps and staff members. Unitu operates a 3 strike policy - if a student's content is reported and then subsequently removed three times they will encounter:

1. **First Warning:** As this is the first time content of the student has been reported and removed, we will only issue a warning.

2. **Anonymity Disabled:** Student's ability to post content anonymously may be removed.

3. **Account Suspension:** Student's Unitu account will be suspended and they will no longer be able access their account to view the discussion boards or to post their own feedback.

The Unitu platform is an extension of UCLan Campus, and is therefore subject to the same regulations including the Regulations for the Conduct of Students and if students are on a professionally regulated course, any regulations within their subject's professional body. In extreme circumstances, SU staff can remove the anonymity to undertake disciplinary action – we don't say this to scare anyone from voicing their concerns, we just want to ensure students have all the information to make an informed decision when they post.

If a student's issue relates to a specific member of staff, Unitu is not the place for that discussion to be had. Staff members have employment rights- they have a right to privacy in any employment issue. UCLan SU recommends that any concerns regarding a member of staff are taken to the Head of School, Becky, Senior Academic Voice Co-ordinator or that students access the SU Advice Service for advice on how to submit a complaint. Academic reps alongside SU staff moderate the private discussion board and work with University staff to

moderate the public section. In order to create change, we need everyone to have a fair opportunity. When deciding whether a post should be on the Unitu system/move into public/should be rewritten, **PAUSE (Professionalism, Appropriate, Upset, Solution, Evaluate)** needs to be used:

Professionalism

Does the post present them in a professional light?

Appropriate

Is this the best option for a resolution? Or do they need to take this up through another mechanism as it is not appropriate for a public discussion? Does it meet the set standards?

Upset

Could their words upset or intimidate another person causing unintentional harm moving away from the real issues at hand?

Solution

Does their post include reasonable student-centred actions as a way to move forward and resolve?

Evaluate

Let's review the post one more time to ensure it communicates what the writer needs it to for a productive discussion.

Once they have pressed PAUSE, and they still feel that the post is good to go – then reps/ SU staff will move it to the public area. Academic reps/ SU staff work hard to review all posts, and ensure it meets the standards of the platform, University and professional body regulations.

University regulations:

Regulations for the conduct of students policy!

uclan.ac.uk/legal/student-policies/taught-courses

Feedback

Constructive feedback is where a student discusses their concerns about an aspect of their course or their broader student experience in a considered manner, without being personal (including the naming of staff or identifying staff by alternate means). Constructive feedback explains where appropriate the impact caused and provides solutions that the student believes would improve their experience. Constructive feedback should follow the **STARS:**

S - **Summarise the issue**

T - **Talk about the impact of the issue**

A - **Avoid pinpointing individuals in a negative manner**

R - **Remain professional and stay on topic**

S - **Suggest a solution**

> **My Tutor in XU2453 is such a bad tutor - they make me want to go to sleep all the time. They are also really biased and it's like they are brainwashing me, which would work if they weren't so bad at teaching! Their feedback on our assessment was as pointless as their lectures. What a waste of £9,250 a year. Sack Joe Bloggs already and we will all be better for it!**

This student did not use the STARS with their feedback, nor PAUSE before pressing send. They have identified a member of staff in a negative light, accused them not only of poor teaching skills, but of being biased in their teaching. Comments like this, could not only damage Joe Bloggs' reputation with their past, present and future students, but calls into question their work integrity. There is also no realistic student centred solution suggested — which means a missed opportunity to create meaningful change with students as partners.

If a post like this was to be received on the platform, Academic Reps would be asked to refer/report this to Becky, Senior Academic Voice Co-ordinator. Becky would then contact the post owner and ask them to rewrite their post in a constructive manner, or would delete it and ask the post commenter to resubmit a new piece of constructive feedback. Comments like this are likely to be referred under the disciplinary process too. Posts like these can also damage the trust given on the platform, making all users hesitant about it being a safe space.

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If a student ever had a concern about the behaviours or opinions of University staff, the Students' Union would recommend that this is brought to the University's attention in a formal and private manner - such as a complaint. At the end of this guidance there is a list of contact information that a student should be signposted to.

Let's redo this:

"**XU2453 is a really interesting module that I feel I could gain a lot from. I would be interested to know if we could look at different ways of presenting the information, such as guest speakers. I would also appreciate looking at other paths of opinion, so that we can broaden our understanding of the topics and give a more robust answer in assignments. If possible, it would be great if we could recieve some more in depth feedback on our last assessment for this so I know where to improve. Thank you.**"

As we can see in our example, this student has explained that they understand how useful the module is, has asked if other ways of presenting the lecture materials could be considered and provided a solution which is student centred and reasonable. Furthermore, the student has explained why looking at other paths of opinion would benefit their learning and have asked about more detailed feedback so that they can improve. This reviews all the above concerns in a professional, considered and solution-based way without identifying individuals.

Responding to posts

As part of Unitu, you can like or dislike each post and like any responses to it, as well as post a response yourself. Further responses/comments are still subject to the same rules and regulations as the original post. If your comment is not going to form part of a productive discussion, then we would suggest that you don't post it until you can respond with something that will.

When responding to posts, make sure your comment is relevant, constructive and provides something to the discussion, and remeber to utilise the PAUSE and STARS methods!

> " I just want to shout out Jon Snow on the XU1066 module. It has been really interesting to understand about all of the different ways in which history has informed fiction such as Game of Thrones. If the books are as good as the lectures, we are all in for a treat. "

How not to respond:

> " Someone is clearly trying to get a better grade - maybe you should do the work instead of embarrassing yourself by giving undeserved praise. Jon Snow really does know nothing about history. "

> I have really enjoyed the seminars facilitated by Rose Wilding in this module. I would like to see some contextual use of Game of Thrones TV and book excerpts in line with the War of the Roses discussion.

Inappropriate responses, what to do?

If you find a post or response does not meet the standards of the platform or the rules and regulations of the University or the associated professional bodies, **then you can report it!**

Main posts can be reported by clicking on the flag icon	Responses can be reported by clicking on three dots	You will then be asked to give a reason as to why you have reported it and give any additional information that you think will help a moderator assess the report.

Once a report is received, it will bring it to the attention of the moderator team. They will decide whether to remove it from Unitu entirely and you will receive an email explaining their decision. If they decide not to remove the content it will remain hidden for you, and you will be able to appeal their decision.

Moderators of Unitu

Academic reps and SU staff are responsible for moderating content on the private area of the feedback board. Academic reps, SU staff and University staff moderate content that is on the public feedback board. If any decision is appealed, the Unitu team will assist the University in making a final decision.

How can students challenge behaviour?

There may be times when academic reps feel uncomfortable when challenging the behaviour of their peers, we understand that this can be a tricky situation and advise Academic Reps to contact Becky, Senior Academic Voice Co-ordinator and she can deal with it.

If students feel comfortable in challenging the behaviour themselves, there are a number of ways which they could do this:
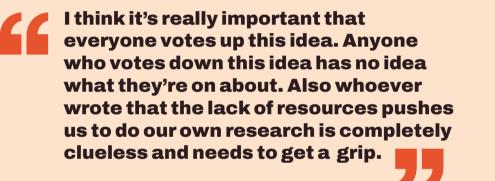
- They may wish to ask the original author of the comment to review the content of the post and consider rewording it: "Please could you review the content to ensure that it

meets the standard expected by Unitu and is in line with the regulations of the University. Thank you"

- They may consider that the comment needs to be removed, but that the student should be given no strike for the incident. "I have had to remove your comment as it was raised as a concern as it does not meet the standards required. Please feel free to review the content of the post and consider how you could approach this in a more constructive manner in future."
- They may consider that the comment needs to be removed as is not appropriate for the platform, but that the student should be given no strike for the incident. "I have had to remove your comment as it was raised as a concern as it does not meet the standards required and is not appropriate for the platform. Please consider accessing support from (signpost service)"

Where a member of staff/student has been named in a negative way and/or the comment is to be removed with a strike, then please contact Becky, who will take on this responsibility and liaise with the affected Staff/Student/School.

Academic reps posting their feedback

Being a rep does NOT mean that they are not entitled to use their own voice to discuss issues affecting them. However, it is important that students make it clear when they are acting in

the capacity of a rep. Academic reps, need to facilitate the discussion, but ensure a non biased approach (no encouraging students to vote in a certain way or counter arguing with a student who disagrees with their opinion).

> **I think it's really important that everyone votes up this idea. Anyone who votes down this idea has no idea what they're on about. Also whoever wrote that the lack of resources pushes us to do our own research is completely clueless and needs to get a grip.**

If a Rep was to post something like this, then it would make people question whether they were saying it as a representative of the course year, or as an individual. Furthermore, it is very negative and could cause harm to the individual who disagreed meaning they no longer feel safe to reach out to their rep or access Unitu.

It's important that students can clearly see when they are representing the course, and when they are representing themselves.

Representing the course

" **As a Course Rep, it is really important that we hear all opinions on this idea and respectfully discuss them. So please make sure you are letting your voice be known on this idea, so we can estimate the level of impact.** "

Representing themselves

" **As a student on the course, I think this idea is great because it means that we could probably use the experience on our CV and practise our research skills at the same time.** "

Key contact information

Academic representatives receive a wide range of feedback from students which are not always within their remit! It is so important to recognise the limits of the roles and know when to signpost students to other support services. Academic reps should only address academic issues and the broader student experience. Examples of issues that should not fall under their responsibilities include finance, funding, health, housing, or employment issues affecting students, as well as academic disputes, complaints about staff, appeals, or disciplinaries.

Becky Best - coursereps@uclan.ac.uk

Krupa Raithatha - yourunion@uclan.ac.uk

SU Societies - studentgroups@uclan.ac.uk

SU Volunteering - suvolunteering@uclan.ac.uk

Luke (SU President) - supresident@uclan.ac.uk

Charlotte (VP Education) - sueducation@uclan.ac.uk

Sophie (VP Activities) - suactivities@uclan.ac.uk

Joe (VP Welfare) - suwelfare@uclan.ac.uk

Academic Advisor - Students can find the academic's email address in their Starfish Profile.

Academic Registry - You can find the contact form through the Student Hub.

Course Lead - Students can find the academic's email address in their Starfish Profile.

Inclusive Support - inclusivesupport@uclan.ac.uk

Study Skills - wiser@uclan.ac.uk

Wellbeing - wellbeing@uclan.ac.uk

SU Advice Service -

suadvice@uclan.ac.uk, confidential, free and impartial advice for students who have concerns around mitigating circumstances, appeals, fitness to practice or anything academic regulations related.

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