



Students as Partners
UNIVERSITY of ADELAIDE

STUDENTS AS PARTNERS HANDBOOK



A Guide to Student Partnership



THE UNIVERSITY
of ADELAIDE

150 YEARS

Principles



Inclusive – all students have voice

Partnerships proactively seek diverse representation that reflects the university's student cohort, ensuring opportunities are accessible and available to all students, regardless of background. Partnership opportunities should consciously identify and remove barriers to student participation such as financial, time, cultural and confidence constraints that could limit the diversity of input and quality of outcomes.

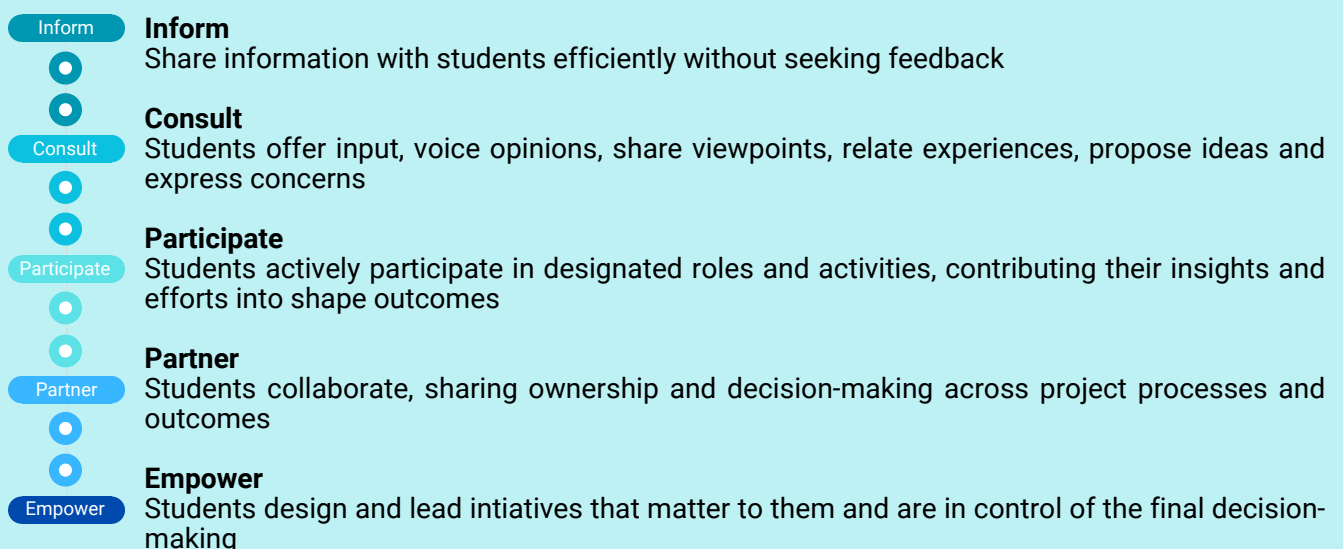
Empowered – student voice has impact

Partnership opportunities acknowledge that a student's lived experience provides a different but equally valuable contribution. Clearly defining this value ensures student feedback and input is positioned as both genuinely valued and prioritised. Partnerships should only occur if student voice is listened to, acted upon, and outcomes fed back. Appropriate role description, onboarding and ongoing support seeks to ensure student partners are positioned to provide high quality input.

Relevant – impact is on areas important to students

Student partnerships should have value and benefit to both the university and students. For student partners, this means contributing to projects seeking to enhance the student experience that are meaningful and they care about. In addition, partnership participation should enhance student partner's skills, knowledge, and growth personally and professionally. To support this, student's motivations and expectations should be understood and consideration of reward and recognition made.

Levels of Engagement



Projects

Students as Partners at the University of Adelaide approach empowers students to collaborate alongside staff, actively participating in decision-making, curriculum design, delivery, and the overall improvement of the university experience. This collaborative effort ensures that students have an equal voice and share equal responsibility in the project. Together, they engage in a co-creative and co-design process, actively shaping the educational offerings based on their firsthand knowledge and experiences as students. The primary objective is to elevate student engagement, foster a sense of ownership, and enhance the overall quality of the student experience within the university.

Examples:

Curriculum Co-design: Students collaborate with staff to co-design course curriculum from courses, assessment methods, reshaping assessment rubrics or new initiatives and learning materials to create more engaging and relevant courses.

Panels: Students serve on panels to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning. They contribute to reviews, recommendations and design for improving the educational experience.

Conferences: Students participate in planning, development and organising conferences (e.g learning and teaching), where they discuss best practices, innovations, and challenges in higher education.

Research Partnership: Students partner with academic researchers to conduct studies, surveys, and experiments, actively contributing to research projects and co-authoring publications.

Paid Opportunities

These positions can be related to research, teaching, daily administrative tasks. These opportunities are employment-based, and students are typically hired to fulfil specific job roles within the university.

Examples:

- Research assistant positions.
- Teaching assistant positions where students assist in teaching and grading.
- Campus administrative roles, such as working in the Library, Ask Adelaide, Success Hubs.

Research Assistant: Students are employed as research assistants, working with academics on research projects. They collect data, conduct literature reviews, and assist with data analysis.

Teaching Assistant (TA) Roles: Students take on TA roles, supporting lecturers in course delivery. They lead seminars, mark assignments, and provide one-on-one or group support to fellow students.

Student Ambassadors: Universities employ students as ambassadors who represent the institution at open days, offer student tours, engage and support current students based on various situations and connect with prospective students and their families.

Peer Mentoring: Students as peer mentors to help new students transition to university life. They provide guidance, share experiences, and offer academic and personal support.

Campus Jobs: Students can secure part-time jobs on campus, such as working in library services, Student Success, Ask Adelaide.



Volunteer Opportunities

Students engage in volunteer work to gain experience that counts towards the Adelaide Graduate Award (AGA), contribute to the university community, and build their CVs. The primary goal for students participating in volunteer opportunities is personal and/or professional development, community service, or a genuine interest in a particular area.

Examples:

Event Volunteering: Universities often seek student volunteers to assist in organising and running orientation, open days, campus tours, and special events, where they serve as guides and information providers.



Student Representative Training Resources



Please ensure you complete the MyUni module before your first engagement!



Being a Student Representative

Remember that being a student representative is a valuable opportunity to make a positive impact on your educational journey and the student community. Your voice will be heard, will be listened to as you are partnering with our university to make a difference and shape the future. Being a student representative requires dedication, effective communication, and a commitment to the improvement of the experience for all.

Benefits and Skills Acquired:

Engaging in the role of a student representative offers numerous benefits and helps develop essential skills, such as:

1. **Leadership Skills:** Develop strong leadership qualities by representing your peers and influence decisions that benefit the student community.
2. **Communication Skills:** Enhance your ability to communicate effectively and with purpose to diverse groups of people.
3. **Problem-Solving Abilities:** Polish your critical thinking and problem-solving skills by addressing student concerns and proposing solutions.
4. **Networking Opportunities:** Build connections with academics, staff and fellow student representatives, expanding your network.
5. **Advocacy Skills:** Learn to advocate for you and your peers.
6. **Public Speaking:** Gain confidence and experience in public speaking by making yourself and your role known to your cohort in lectures / tutorials and during meetings and presentations.
7. **Understanding Governance:** Gain a deeper understanding of the governance structure and decision-making processes within our University.

Tips from One Student Representative to Another:

1. **Stay Informed:** Keep yourself updated on current campus issues and student concerns to effectively represent your peers.
2. **Network and Collaborate:** Build relationships with other student representatives, staff and academics to leverage collective influence.
3. **Balance Advocacy and Diplomacy:** While advocating for student interests, remember to maintain respectful.
4. **Active Listening:** Pay attention to diverse perspectives, even if they differ from your own, to make well-informed decisions.
5. **Time Management:** Effectively balance your academic commitments and the demands of the role to prevent burnout.
6. **Seek guidance:** Seek guidance when uncertain and hesitant. Know when to escalate.





Forming Positive Relationships

Board: holds a prominent position, overseeing the institution's overarching governance, policies, and strategic direction. Comprised of staff members with diverse expertise, the board convenes periodically to make pivotal decisions impacting the university.

Committee: various committees exist, such as academic, finance, or student affairs committees, which handle specific aspects of university operations. These committees, often consisting of academics, staff and student representatives. Committees convene more regularly to address focused issues like curriculum development, budgeting, or student welfare.

Student Representatives play a crucial role in representing the student body's interests and concerns within various committees or boards. **Your primary responsibilities include:**

1. **Advocating for Student Interests:** Student representatives act as the voice of the student body, advocating for their needs, concerns, and suggestions within the committee or board.
2. **Providing Feedback:** They gather feedback and input from fellow students regarding academic programs, policies, and initiatives, and relay this information to the committee.
3. **Attending Meetings:** Student representatives attend meetings, actively participate in discussions, and present student perspectives and concerns.
4. **Promoting Transparency:** They work to ensure transparency and open communication between students and the committee and ensure the feedback loop is completed by sharing relevant information and decisions with the student body.
5. **Collaborating:** Student representatives collaborate with staff and other committee members to find common ground and address student-related issues effectively.
6. **Initiating Positive Changes:** They propose solutions and initiatives to improve the academic experience and student life within the University.



Forming Positive Relationships

Tips for Student Representatives on Committees:

1. **Understand Your Role:** Familiarise yourself with the committee's purpose, goals, and responsibilities. Understand your role as a student representative and the expectations placed on you.
2. **Listen Actively:** Actively engage with your fellow students to understand their concerns and ideas. Be a receptive and empathetic listener to effectively represent their interests.
3. **Build Relationships:** Establish positive relationships with committee members, staff, and other stakeholders. Collaboration and respect are essential for achieving common goals.
4. **Prepare and Research:** Come to meetings well-prepared. Being informed allows you to make informed contributions.
5. **Communicate Effectively:** Clearly and confidently express the views, opinions, and concerns of the student body. Articulate your points in a constructive and respectful manner.
6. **Follow Up:** After meetings, update your peers on what was discussed and the outcomes. Keep the lines of communication open and be accessible to students who want to share their thoughts.



Something to Keep in Mind:

Remember that your role is to represent the diverse interests and concerns of the student body. You may encounter differing viewpoints and challenging situations. It's essential to maintain neutral and act in the best interest of all students.



Your Voice Counts

Why Your Voice Matters:

- You represent the student body: Your presence in these meetings ensures that the concerns, needs, and feedback of students are taken into account.
- You provide a unique perspective: As a student, you bring a perspective that is different from staff, making your insights valuable.
- Enhancing decision-making: Your input can lead to more informed and equitable decisions, positively impacting the experience.

Pace, Impact, and Relevance:

- Stay on topic: Stick to the agenda and avoid veering off into unrelated subjects.
- Be concise: Present your points clearly and avoid overloading with information. Always slow down your talking!
- Use examples: Illustrate your points with real-life examples to make your feedback relatable and impactful.
- Summarise key points: At the end of your presentation, recap the most critical takeaways to reinforce your message.

Sticking to Time and Relevance:

Respect time limits: Ensure you adhere to the allocated time for your presentation.

Prioritise key issues: Focus on the most pressing concerns and feedback, leaving less urgent matters for later discussions.

Be adaptable: Be prepared to adjust your presentation if time constraints arise.

Tips for Effective Presentations:

Online Presentations:

- Check your technology: Ensure your internet connection, microphone, and camera are working well before the meeting.
- Minimise distractions: Find a quiet, well-lit space to present from.
- Be interactive: Encourage questions and participation from other attendees through the online platform's features.

In-Person Presentations:

- Prepare materials: If using slides or handouts, have them ready in advance.
- Keep to time
- Establish eye contact: Make eye contact with the committee members – have confidence, you can do it!
- Be aware of body language: Maintain a confident and open posture to enhance your presentation's impact.

Tips for Managing Nerves:

1. Practice: Rehearse your presentation multiple times, both in front of a mirror and with a friend or family member or record yourself. This will boost your confidence!
2. Deep Breathing: Use deep breathing techniques to calm nerves before and during your presentation. In for 4, hold for 4, out for 4!
3. Focus on the Message: Concentrate on the importance of the information you're sharing and the voices you represent.





Connecting With Your Students

As a Student Representative, one of your key responsibilities is to engage and connect with your peers to gather their thoughts and feedback on various academic matters. Building strong relationships with your fellow students is essential to effectively represent their interests. Here are some tips and examples to help you engage and connect with your peers.

You'll need to establish your own presence and actively connect with your peers to understand their thoughts, needs, and concerns on various matters. This involves making yourself approachable and accessible.

Actively engaging with your peers involves taking a proactive approach to connect with them. Some tips from fellow Student Reps:

Be front and centre at lectures / tutorials:

Why:

Puts a face to the name and role, builds trust and connection within your cohort! Shows you have a relationship with your academics as you are presenting in their time slot and in front of them – your voice matters!

How:

- Talk to your academics / tutors to present in the first 5 mins of a lecture / tutorial
- Keep this being semi regular (2 – 3 times a semester) to keep your cohort informed, to connect with them in an informal way and to provide that feedback loop.
- Be approachable provide them times and options outside of this forum on how to connect with you to share their insights, feedback and concerns.

Attend Student Events:

Why:

- Attending social and academic events gives you the opportunity to interact with your peers in a more informal setting.

How:

- Attend club / university wide events.
- Be approachable and strike up conversations with students to understand their concerns and interests.





Connecting With Your Students

Here are some tips and examples to help you engage and connect with your peers:

Maintain an Online Presence:

An online presence can help you stay connected with a broader group of students.

How:

- Use social media or online platforms (MyUni) to share updates and information about your role, request feedback or keep your cohort in the loop.
- Encourage students to reach out to you with questions or feedback through these platforms.

Organise Focus Groups:

Focus groups is another way to gather in-depth insights and feedback on specific issues. While it requires more commitment from your cohort, it provides a dedicated time you are all together to form your ideas and concerns. Use established tools like a club for promotion!

How:

- Connect with a club and work with them to communicate this with their members.
- Promote the focus group well in advance to ensure maximum participation.
- Collaborate with staff to secure resources and a suitable meeting place.
- Keep the invite open, encouraging a diverse group and a range of perspectives.
- Provide background information before the session to ensure participants are well-informed.



Escalations

Defining When to Refer or Escalate Student Issues:

As a student leader, it is crucial to understand when to refer or escalate a situation. Referral involves directing students to the appropriate support or resource when the issue exceeds your expertise, while escalation is necessary for urgent or severe situations that require higher-level intervention.

Identifying the Appropriate Channels and Procedures for Referrals and Escalations Within the University:

Knowing the right channels and procedures is essential. For referrals, direct students to academic support services, wellness services, the Diversity and Inclusion Office, or student services, depending on the nature of the issue. For escalations, contact campus security, senior university staff, or the Student as Partners Manager as needed.

Understanding the Significance of Timely and Accurate Handling of Student Concerns:

Timely and accurate handling of student concerns is vital for student well-being, academic success, and maintaining trust within the university community.

Don't have much experience being on a committee? Don't stress - as you will become familiar with the procedures! You should also receive some form of induction before your first meeting, but if not, don't be afraid to contact the committee Chair and ask some questions, including:

1. How does the committee operate? When are the meeting agendas distributed? Is there a process for proposing agenda items?
2. What is the timing, frequency and duration of the meetings?
3. If I cannot make it to a meeting, what is the procedure for notifying? Who do I notify?
4. How frequently, if at all, am I required to provide a report, and how can I express my interest in doing so?
5. How can I access meeting minutes and any required materials in advance?
6. If I have questions between meetings, how and with whom can I communicate?
7. Where, when and who do I escalate to?





Meetings - how?

What is my role in this meeting?

As a student representative, your role serves as part of a forum where you actively contribute, discuss, and make decisions on behalf of your fellow students.

1. Exchange Information: Meetings provide a platform to share updates, ideas, and feedback between the student body and relevant stakeholders.
2. Collaborate: They facilitate collaboration among students, academics, and staff, promoting collective decision-making.
3. Problem-Solving: Meetings enable the identification of issues, brainstorming solutions, and making decisions to address student concerns and enhance the overall experience.



Meeting Etiquette:

Meeting etiquette is essential to maintain a productive and respectful atmosphere.

1. Punctuality: Arrive on time and avoid causing delays. Give yourself time if you don't know where the room is. Always ask if you aren't sure on where to go.
2. Active Listening: Pay attention to others and avoid interrupting while they speak.
3. Respectful Communication: Use respectful language and tone when expressing your views.
4. Stay on Topic: Keep discussions relevant to the agenda items.
5. Minimise Distractions: Silence your phone (or put to do not disturb) and avoid multitasking during the meeting.

Meeting Procedures:

When attending meetings as a student representative, it's important to be familiar with the following procedures:

1. Agenda and minutes: Review the meeting agenda and minutes from previous meeting in advance to understand the topics to be discussed.
2. Participation: Contribute actively to discussions and raise relevant concerns.
3. Minutes: Minutes will be taken during the meeting to document decisions and action items.
4. Actions: After the meeting, follow up on action items assigned to you and communicate updates to your cohort.
5. Tip: Note your own action items and due date for you to refer to
6. Absence: If you cannot attend a meeting, inform the Chair or relevant member in advance and confirm you will read the minutes to stay informed about the meeting's outcomes.
7. Respect: Show respect to all participants, even when there are differing opinions, and adhere to meeting timeframes.



Insider Tips for Student Representatives:

From one student to another, here are four tips:

1. Stay Informed: Keep yourself updated on student news, club events and student concerns to represent them effectively.
2. Network: Build relationships with staff and fellow student representatives to enhance your influence and connections. Be "in the know" and share challenges to seek guidance and assistance.
3. Be Proactive: Don't wait for issues to arise; initiate discussions on topics that matter to students. Be front and centre, make yourself known!
4. Respect: Advocate for you and your fellow student interests but do so with and respect to foster cooperation and productive discussions.





Differences in Opinion

In a meeting, differences of opinion and diversity of perspectives are not only common but also valuable. These differences can lead to constructive and positive discussions that drive the conversation forward. By acknowledging and managing these differences, members can connect deeper and make well-informed decisions.

What's Okay in Meetings When Differences of Opinions Occur:

1. **Constructive Debate:** Engaging in constructive debates and discussions about differing viewpoints can lead to a more well-rounded decision-making process.
2. **Respectful Listening:** Actively listening to others, even if their opinions differ, is crucial for fostering a collaborative atmosphere and environment.
3. **Seeking Common Ground:** Encouraging efforts to find common ground and compromise when opinions clash can lead to balanced decisions.
4. **Encouraging Diverse Perspectives:** Welcoming and valuing diverse perspectives as opportunities for innovative solutions and better decision outcomes.

Student Tips for When Differences Are Directed at Them:

- **Stay Professional:** Respond professionally and respectfully to criticisms or differing opinions. It doesn't mean you are wrong!
- **Consider Feedback:** Reflect on feedback and use it as an opportunity for personal growth and improvement.
- **Seek Support:** If you feel targeted or unfairly treated, consult with the committee Chair, [Student as Partners team](#) for guidance on conflict resolution.
- **Stay Composed:** Maintain composure and avoid reacting emotionally to disagreements or criticism.

What's Not Okay in Meetings:

1. **Disrespectful Behaviour:** Engaging in disrespectful or offensive language, personal attacks, or discriminatory comments is never acceptable.
2. **Dismissal of Ideas Based on Personal Attributes:** Dismissing ideas solely based on personal attributes such as age, gender, ethnicity, job title, or other irrelevant factors is inappropriate.
3. **Intolerance of Alternative Viewpoints:** Displaying a lack of tolerance or open-mindedness towards different opinions can hinder productive discussions.
4. **Hijacking Discussions:** consistently interrupting discussions to prevent other viewpoints from being heard is disruptive.
5. **Failure to Seek Common Ground:** Refusing to collaborate, compromise, or seek common ground when differences of opinion arise can lead to stagnation.

Student Tips for Managing Differences of Opinions:

- **Stay Open-Minded:** Be open to hearing and considering alternative perspectives.
- **Maintain Respect:** Always communicate respectfully, even if you disagree with someone.
- **Seek Clarification:** If you don't understand or disagree with a viewpoint, ask for clarification to ensure you fully comprehend it.
- **Use Evidence:** Support your arguments with evidence or data to strengthen your position.

The following tips are intended to provide guidance and support to all committee members, ensuring a productive and respectful environment. If you witness another member displaying inappropriate behaviour, do not let it intimidate you; instead, use it as an opportunity to foster positive change. After the meeting, consider bringing the matter to the attention of the Chair or the [Student as Partners team](#)





Conflict of Interest

Conflict of interest is when a member's personal interests or connections might interfere with their ability to make impartial decisions that best serve all students. It's like a situation where someone's personal stakes could cloud their judgment or fairness. It's crucial to identify and address these conflicts to maintain trust and transparency in the committee's work.



Actual Conflict of Interest:

An actual conflict of interest exists when an individual's personal interests, relationships, or financial gain directly and currently influence their decision-making or actions, potentially compromising their objectivity. In this case, there is a clear, present conflict.

Potential Conflict of Interest:

A potential conflict of interest indicates that there is a risk or the possibility of a conflict arising in the future, even if it hasn't yet materialised. While the conflict isn't currently affecting the individual's judgment, it could do so under certain circumstances.

Perceived Conflict of Interest:

A perceived conflict of interest is not based on the actual existence of a conflict but rather on how an individual's actions or affiliations may be perceived by others. Even if there is no direct influence on decision-making, the perception of a potential conflict can still undermine trust and integrity.

Conflict of Interest

Types of Conflicts of Interest:

1. **Financial Conflict:** This occurs when a student representative stands to gain financially from a decision or action taken by the committee. Examples include endorsing a textbook authored by the representative, which could financially benefit them.
2. **Personal Relationship Conflict:** A personal relationship conflict arises when a representative's connection with another committee member or a person outside the committee might influence their decision-making. For instance, voting in favour of a friend's proposal without evaluating its merits.
3. **Organisational Conflict:** This type occurs when a representative has affiliations with external organisations that could affect their objectivity. For example, if a student representative is also a paid employee of a company that contracts with the university.
4. **Competing Roles Conflict:** A competing roles conflict occurs when a representative holds multiple roles that might conflict with their responsibilities in the committee. For example, serving as a student representative while also being a member of a university department with vested interests in committee decisions.

How to declare?

1. **Speak Up:** Declare your conflict as early as possible. If you don't know it until the meeting is underway, raise your hand or seek the Chair's recognition to indicate that you'd like to address a conflict of interest.
2. **State the Conflict:** Clearly and concisely explain the nature of the conflict, specifying how it relates to the agenda item or the matter being discussed. Be honest and transparent.
3. **Describe the Impact:** If necessary, briefly mention how the conflict could influence your judgment or decision-making on the issue.
4. **Propose a Solution:** Suggest a course of action to manage the conflict, which may include recusing yourself from the discussion or refraining from voting on the matter.



Confidentiality

Good Practices for Managing Confidentiality:

1. **Understand What's Confidential:** Clearly understand what information is meant to be confidential and what can be shared openly. This may be outlined in your committee's guidelines or code of conduct.
2. **Consistently Keep Records:** Maintain accurate records of confidential discussions, ensuring you have a reference if needed, while respecting privacy.
3. **Seek Guidance:** If you're unsure about the confidentiality of a matter, consult with the committee Chair or the [Student as Partners team](#) for clarification.
4. **Limit Access:** Only share confidential information with individuals who have a legitimate need to know and are authorised to access that information.
5. **Be Transparent:** When communicating with others about the nature of the issue, inform them that it involves confidential information and cannot be disclosed.

Bad Practices for Managing Confidentiality:

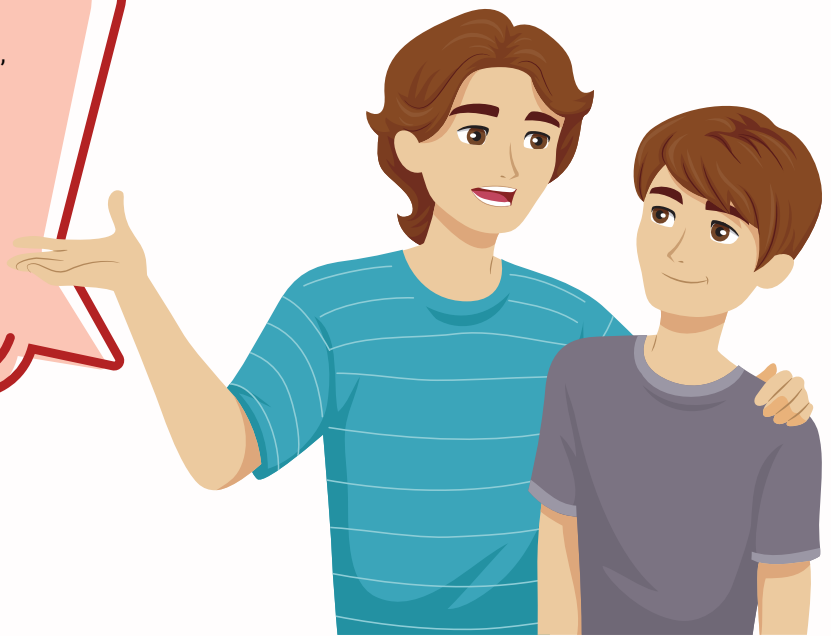
1. **Gossiping:** Avoid discussing confidential matters with others, especially in casual or non-professional settings. Gossiping can harm trust, credibility and your reputation.
2. **Unauthorised Disclosure:** Never share confidential information with individuals who are not authorised to access it, as this can compromise the trust placed in you.
3. **Neglecting Privacy:** Be mindful of how you store and transmit confidential data to prevent accidental breaches of privacy.

Moving Away from Confidential Conversations:

When individuals push for information, you can't share due to confidentiality, consider the following steps:

- **Be Firm but Polite:** Politely remind them that the information is confidential and cannot be disclosed. You can say something like, "I'm sorry, but I cannot share that information due to confidentiality."
- **Redirect the Conversation:** Shift the discussion toward non-confidential topics or offer to address any concerns or questions that are not tied to confidential matters.
- **Consult the Chair:** If someone insists on prying into confidential matters, consult with your committee Chair or the [Student as Partners team](#) for guidance on how to handle the situation.
- **Educate on Confidentiality:** Explain the importance of confidentiality and its role in maintaining trust and privacy within the committee.

Managing confidentiality can be challenging, but it's essential for maintaining the trust and effectiveness of your role as a student representative. Always prioritise the ethical handling of confidential information while respecting privacy and trust.



ACADEMIC STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES (ASR)

ACADEMIC STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES (ASR) ARE THOSE WHO ARE FACULTY AND PROGRAM REPS

Student Checklist

As a student representative, here's what you can expect during your induction and onboarding process:

- You will receive a welcome email introducing all committee members and outlining their roles. This will help you get to know your fellow members before your first meeting.
- The welcome email will include relevant attachments that you can refer to until your first meeting. These attachments will typically include previous meeting minutes and the committee's membership details and terms of reference (ToR).
- You will be invited to a meeting (which can be online or in person) to discuss the expectations of your role within the committee and have the opportunity to ask any questions you may have. During this meet-up, you will go over:
 - Your role within the committee.
 - The purpose and objectives of your role.
 - Meeting formats and procedures.
 - Communication methods used by the committee.
 - The desired outcomes and goals of the committee.
 - Clear clarification of your responsibilities.
- Before your first meeting, there will be a brief meet-up (usually five minutes prior) with the chair at a specified location to help you enter the first meeting with confidence.
- You will receive clear guidelines outlining what is expected of you as a student representative.
- If you ever encounter challenges or need assistance in fulfilling your role, you can always reach out to the [Student as Partners team](#) for support.
- You can expect to receive the meeting agenda in advance of each meeting, allowing you to provide feedback and prepare before the meeting takes place.



Proceed with Care

- Avoid discussing academic requirements or procedures; instead, direct students to the website or faculty staff who possess expertise in these matters.
- Please refrain from using personal communication methods for correspondence and stick to university-approved channels like email.
- Do not distribute any official documents (such as meeting agendas, minutes, or emails) without confirming with your chair what information can be shared with students for feedback purposes. Maintain confidentiality at all times.
- Do not engage in public or online discussions that may compromise the reputation or privacy of the university, its faculty, staff, or students. Keep discussions and feedback within appropriate and confidential channels.





Students as Partners

UNIVERSITY of ADELAIDE

THANK YOU



THE UNIVERSITY
of ADELAIDE

150 YEARS