

EC Students' Association

Class Rep Meeting 2 Report

February 2023

In total, 37 Class Reps attended the meetings held online in early February. While this figure is down on previous meetings, if we take each Class Rep to represent the views of 15 students, in total, 555 student views were represented. The Class Reps who attended were highly engaged, responding to questions on Mentimeter and reacting in the MS Teams chat.

Meeting objectives

- To present updates and information from the ECSA officers and relevant partners including the results of the End of Semester 1 Survey and the upcoming ECSA Elections
- To gather feedback about ongoing developments at the College such as the Staff Voluntary Severance Scheme and the potential introduction of Gender-Neutral Toilets on campus
- To find out what matters are currently impacting the Class Reps' overall student experience
- To encourage current Class Reps to reflect on how to improve the Class Rep experience

How are students feeling?

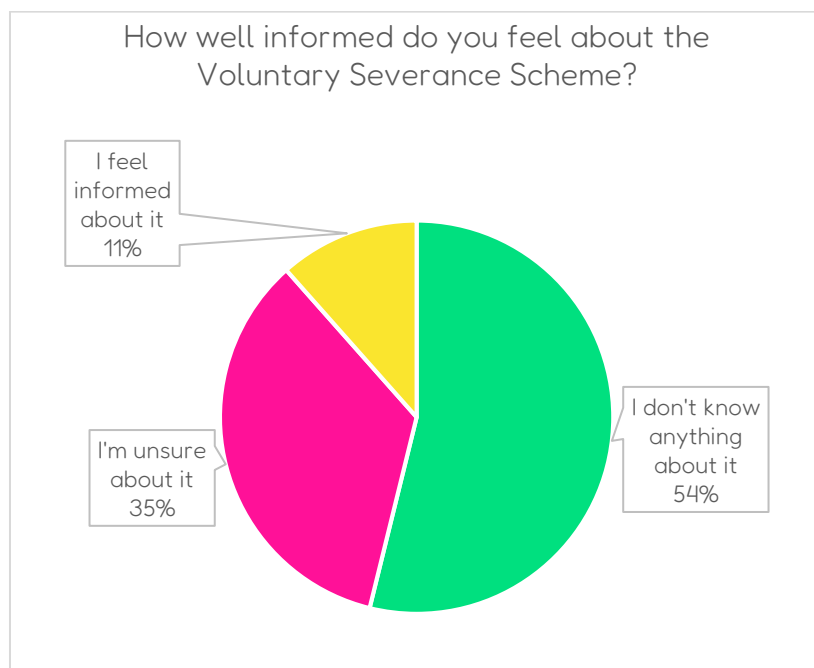
We believe that our Class Reps are a key part of the College ecosystem, as their engagement, thoughts and feedback can give us valuable insights into how students are feeling. Our Class Rep meetings allow the Students' Association to be an active channel for distributing important information from the College to students. Perhaps even more importantly, they give us a unique opportunity to 'take the temperature' amongst the student body.

For the following sections, we asked our Class Reps to answer a series of questions using the online presentation and data collection tool, Mentimeter. This allows students to respond anonymously and share feedback in a variety of ways.

1. Staff Voluntary Severance Scheme

As of January, Edinburgh College has been engaged in a consultation with various members of Learning & Teaching staff, as part of the new strategic plan. The overview of this curriculum reshaping consultation and voluntary severance scheme was communicated to students via an all-student email from the Principal, Audrey Cumberland, on 19 January. The message highlighted that students could get in touch with ECSA if they have concerns around the proposals. However, we have had very minimal interaction with students about this: barely anyone had reached out. We therefore prioritised asking our Class Reps about this, to see how well informed they were.

As you will see from the graphics and wordcloud below, the results that came back from our Class Reps were not particularly encouraging. Only 11% of respondents said they felt informed about the scheme, with another 35% saying they were unsure about it, and a further 54% said they didn't know anything about it.



When asked to give up to three responses to the question "How do you feel about the proposals?", the subsequent answers emerged.



As the wordcloud demonstrates, some of the Class Reps responded positively, with "good" or "fine" being used more than once. However, the overall feeling was one of anxiety, with one student remarking "I feel it is very unfair; The future is at risk; College reputation drops." We asked the Class Reps to share any further worries or concerns about the process and the general themes we came across were:

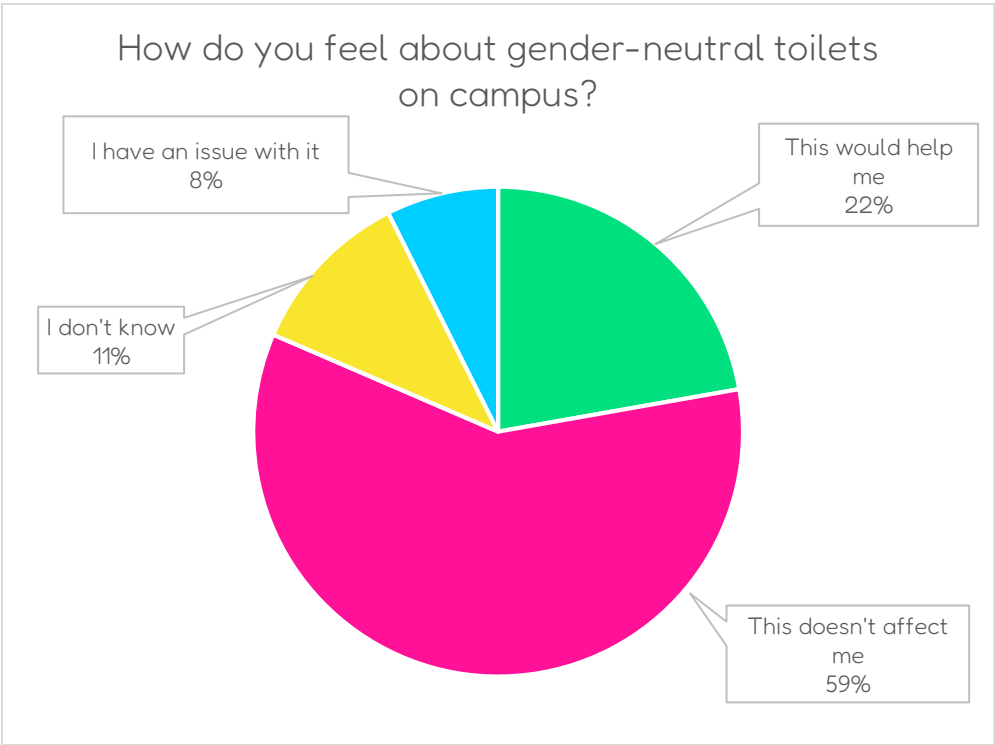
- Concerns around the uncertainty of the future: *"The unknown and our potential futures being completely out of our hands."*
- Worries about how effectively the information is conveyed to students: *"Concerned that the college won't communicate."*
- Sympathy and concern towards anyone who might lose their jobs and the impact this might have on students: *"The lectures who try so hard, will have to compete against each other for their jobs, this can reflect stress on students and staff."*

The Students' Association Full Time Officers and Staff appreciate that this is a challenging period of change for the College while it embarks on a new strategic plan. Yet the lack of awareness amongst Class Reps about the proposed curriculum reshaping plans and the voluntary severance scheme is concerning, particularly as active Class Reps tend to be some of the most informed and engaged

students at the College. It suggests that students do not feel they are aware of what developments are taking place. Once the consultation period is over and the implications of these changes are more certain, it will be important to keep students in the loop and the Students' Association is committed to playing a part in facilitating communications between the students and the College, and responding to any queries we are asked by students and Class Reps.

2. Gender-Neutral Toilets

Over the past several months, VP Activities, Luna Morrison, has been exploring the possibility of introducing gender-neutral toilets on campus. This builds upon work done by previous Students' Association Full Time Officers, and is a change which we believe would go a long way to help create a welcoming and inclusive space for transgender and non-binary students. We wanted to explore Class Reps views on this matter, and when we asked them how they would feel if gender-neutral toilets were introduced on campus, we received the following responses.



The majority of Class Reps surveyed (59%) said that they didn't think the introduction of gender-neutral toilets would affect them, 22% said it would help them, 11% said they did not know, and 8% said that they have an issue with it. We assured students that the gender-neutral toilet option would be an additional option for students and staff to choose from, and both male- and female-only toilets would still be available for the College population.

With the results being somewhat mixed, we opened up a further opportunity for discussion, asking for students to share their thoughts, queries and concerns about gender-neutral toilets. You can see their responses in the graphic below.



When it comes to gender-neutral toilets, it seems that some of the concern raised was around funding, particularly as the Class Reps had just been discussing the voluntary redundancy scheme for Learning & Teaching staff. Student President, David, who chaired both Class Rep meetings, explained that the funding for these areas were drawn from different budgets, so that dispelled some concerns. Many Reps reflected on the positives and inclusivity aspect of gender-neutral toilets. In the coming weeks, we will be taking this discussion forward to relevant College committees and groups, including WAX-ED and in meetings with Nina Munday, the College's EDI Lead.

3. Elections

With EC Students' Association Elections coming up, we were keen to let Class Reps know about what this entailed and to check in on how engagement levels are. The results were pleasing, with 91% of Reps saying they were likely to vote in the Elections this year.

Responses to the question "How likely are you to run for a Full-Time Officer role?" were understandably more reserved, with 57% of respondents saying they were unlikely to run, while 30% said they would like more information, and 13% said they were likely to run.

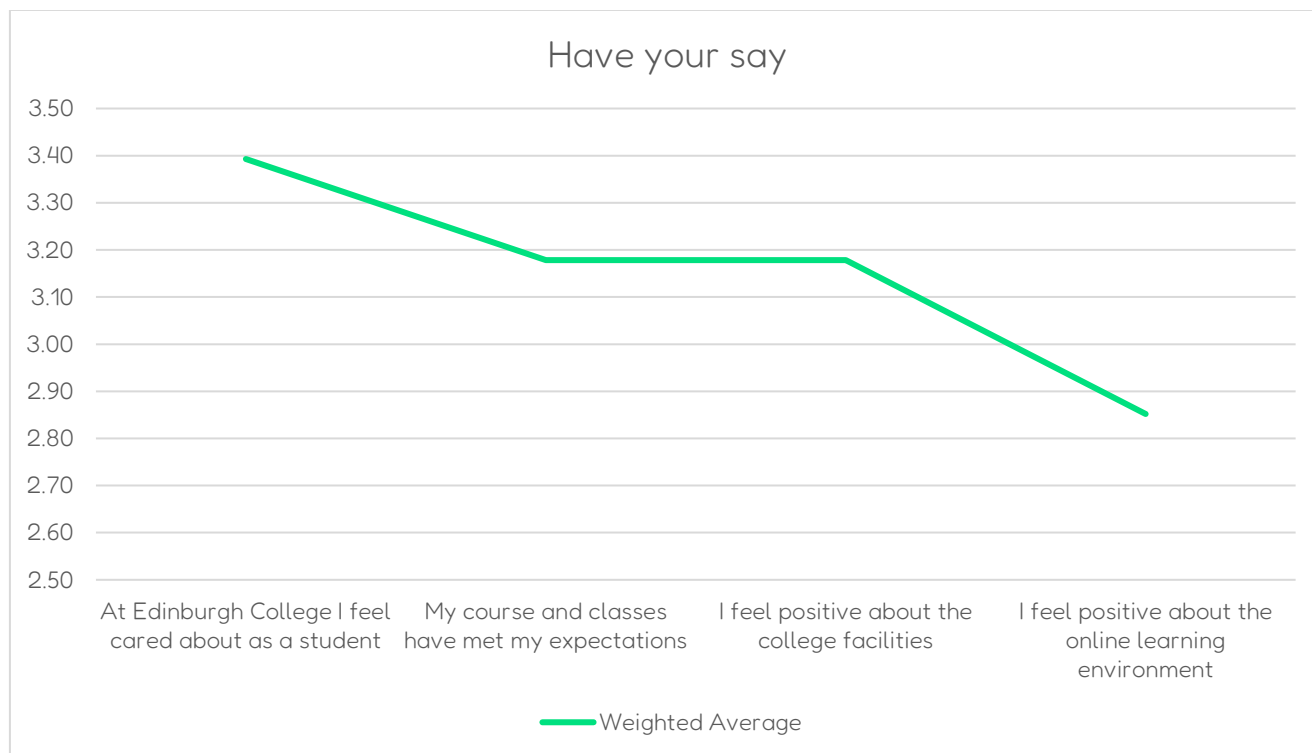
We will be sure to circulate more information about running and voting in the coming weeks, both to Class Reps through our MS Teams channel, and to the wider student body as a whole. We are grateful to Learning Development Tutors, Curriculum Team Managers and everyone who is spreading the word about Elections and look forward to receiving applications from our nominees.

4. Have your say

Following on from conversations with Gail Graham, Assistant Principal: Quality & Improvement, we decided to ask the Class Reps to respond to a series of statement reflecting on their overall experience at Edinburgh College. Respondents rated a series of statements on a scale of 1– 5, where 1= “strongly disagree” and 5 = “strongly agree”.

As is shown in the chart below, responses tended to average out in the middle of the scale:

- *“At Edinburgh College I feel cared about as a student”* received an average response of 3.39
- *“My course and classes have met my expectations”* received an average response of 3.18
- *“I feel positive about the College facilities”* received an average response of 3.18
- *“I feel positive about the online learning environment”* received an average response of 2.85



On average, the Class Reps we surveyed seem to feel fairly neutral towards their College experience, when factoring in the pastoral experience (feeling cared about), their expectations of the Learning & Teaching side, and the College facilities. On average, there was more negative feeling towards the online learning environment. Asking the Class Reps to rate these statements on a sliding scale was a useful tool, and is something we will incorporate into future meetings and surveys, asking more detailed questions and drilling down further into each of these aspects of their College experience.

In the second part of the Have Your Say section, we opened the floor to Class Reps to raise other matters affecting them and the students they represent. While the matters raised are hugely varied and some pertain to individual students' experiences, there were some trends.

Catering Several Class Reps complained of an inadequate and expensive catering offer, with campuses being under-resourced for options, which has a knock-on effect of long queues. Concern was raised on the lack of healthy options.

Facilities issues A number of Class Reps raised specific issues about facilities and access needs, such as urgent cleaning needed at campus toilets. Many of these issues were flagged with the relevant staff/departments immediately after the meeting and have since been fixed.

Learning & Teaching	Some Class Reps raised concerns about the Learning & Teaching experience, including: fears that online learning is less engaging; that there is a lack of communication from lecturers about timetabling and other changes; that teaching staff are stressed and sometimes absent, which impacts the students negatively; that LDTs were not assigned to classes and that the quality of LDT engagement varied.
Funding	Concerns were raised about some students struggling financially and being declined discretionary funding, or being unable to access funding due to certain rules in place, such as means-tested grants.

Some Class Reps used this space to reflect positively on their experiences: *"I'd like to commend the tutors based at Granton in Hairdressing. They are an incredible asset to the department, consistently going over and above for their students."* It was brilliant to read this feedback, which has inspired the EC Students' Association team to run another [Great Big Student Thank You](#), which will give students an opportunity to thank their tutors and LDTs for their hard work over this academic year.

5. Class Rep Meetings

As we only meet our Class Reps a few times per academic year, we were eager to get their feedback as to how to improve the experience. Questioning them on whether they preferred to meet online or in-person, 66% said online, while 34% preferred the in-person option. We may try out a hybrid solution in the spring if possible, to see if we can cover all our bases at once.

It was encouraging to see that the vast majority of the Class Reps who attended our meetings said that it was useful (69% very useful; 27% somewhat useful; 4% not useful).

Further comments suggested it would be helpful to have more regular meetings, and to share the agenda with the Class Reps beforehand and the notes/actions afterwards, so that they can feed back to the classes they are representing. We are taking this important feedback into account for future planning. One respondent reflected: *"I've appreciated that there's an outlet for issues or ideas to improve things for students that's run by students."*

6. Conclusion

The Class Rep system continues to be invaluable, not only for gaining feedback from Edinburgh College students about their experiences, but also as a conduit of useful information between the College Management, the Students' Association and the student body. This report has focused on the outcomes of questions we asked the Class Reps, and has highlighted certain issues, worries and concerns around developments at the College. While the number of Class Reps who attended was comparatively low, those who did attend demonstrated a high level of engagement and almost all found the meeting to be useful. We will take learnings from these questions further and will circulate these notes to Class Reps and to the College Board of Management's Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee.