**Shape UCL | Staff Guide 2022**

Office of the Vice-Provost (Education & Student Experience)



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**To follow in the next edition:** Induction, Elections, Integrated Shape UCL & Moodle link, Data sync

# Introduction

Shape UCL is a space where students, academic representatives, and staff can collectively raise, discuss, and resolve academic and general experience issues.

The platform allows students to discuss and vote on matters they’d like to escalate to departmental staff for attention. This enables the department to consider and, where appropriate, promptly address these concerns and for students to see the decisions and actions taken.

How Shape UCL works:

* Students share feedback on their experiences by creating a feedback post on their board. This can be about an issue they are facing, asking a question, sharing praise, or suggesting a new idea. The content of the post is not visible to staff at this stage.
* Students engage with other students' feedback posts by voting and commenting, allowing them to see whether their feedback has resonated with others.
* Student Reps connect with their peers by reviewing, responding, moderating, and escalating important topics to staff in their department. Reps do this by moving the post to the Open section of the board.
* Staff can now see the feedback post and provide an initial response and further updates to students as their feedback moves from the In Progress to the Closed section of the board.
* The Together We Changed section shows notable changes in the department or improvements to its programmes. This is where students and staff can review how their feedback and actions taken have helped Shape UCL.

Through using Shape UCL:

* Students can help inspire change within their faculty, department, and programme through their feedback.
* Reps can connect with their peers and staff by escalating important topics.
* Staff can create greater visibility and transparency around the decisions and actions taken in their department.
* All parties engage in constructive dialogue and identify good practices to help build a sense of community.

# Getting started

Accessing Shape UCL

Once your account is created you will receive an email notification that provides login instructions.

As single sign-on is enabled, you will access Shape UCL using your usual UCL credentials via the following URL – <https://ucl.unitu.co.uk/>.

Changing your account settings

Once signed in, you can access your **Settings** in the top left corner of the screen underneath your name.

In the Account section:

* You can add a **Profile picture** to help students make a name to face recognition and help make the platform more personable. If you use a profile picture on Outlook, consider using the same one here for consistency.
* You can also manage your **University Title** to help students understand who the different members of staff are on the board and their roles in the department.

In the Notification section:

* Depending on the level of activity on your board, the platform can generate a lot of email notifications. You should check the default settings and review what is currently enabled. For example, a Board Admin would want to keep **New Feedback Posts** enabled, but an occasional staff user might wish to disable these. The **Weekly Digest** provides a handy summary of the activity that has taken place over the past week.

Adding staff (Board Admin functionality)

A Board Admin can invite existing staff users to their board or create new staff accounts, through the following steps:

* Click Members > Click Staff > Click Add Staff
* In the pop-up box, to invite an existing Shape UCL user to your board, type in their UCL email address and click **Send Invite**
* To create a new staff account, in the same pop-up box click the link **Add Staff to Unitu**
* In the pop-up box enter their name, UCL email address and University Title (role) and click **Send Invite**

Removing staff

Please contact VPESE with the names of staff members that no longer require access to your board.

Adding or removing Reps

If you’re running an election on Shape UCL, your Reps can be appointed at the end of the voting period, or you can add them manually through the following steps:

* Click Members > Click Students
* Scroll or Ctrl+F to find the student you want to appoint as a Rep then > Click **Add as Rep**

You can remove last year’s Reps through the following steps:

* Click Members > Reps > Click **Remove as Rep** beside the student’s name

# Your Shape UCL Board

This is where students, Reps and staff interact with feedback that students raise. The Board area is split into two sections Private and Public, with several tabs that run along the top.

**Board name** – is usually the name of your department displayed at the top of your screen. If you ever need to change this contact VPESE.

**Private Feedback** – this is where students raise and discuss feedback by creating feedback posts. Once a post has received enough votes and comments or cannot be dealt with by students, the Reps escalate it to the Public area. While staff do not have access to the Private area, they can see how many feedback posts have been created, what programme it relates to, how many votes/comments it has received, and the year of study of the author.

**Public Feedback** – this is where staff members review the escalated feedback, comment, and update students as they progress feedback from the initial Opened column to In Progress and eventually the Closed column. While posts remain open, students can elaborate or provide further context through additional comments. They can also like or report responses that breach the Community Guidelines. Only staff members can move or close feedback posts in this area.

**About** – this is currently set to a template created by VPESE, and contains essential guidance, along with further information and links. This page can be edited and tailored to suit the department style or include local “house rules.” It is broken into four editable\* sections:

* **Welcome & House rules:** the bullet points reference the Community Guidelines
* **Feedback categories:** VPESE have created a standard set of “core” categories, but Board Admins can create additional ones
* **Further advice, helpful links:** VPESE have added a few essential links
* **Rep & staff response times:** it is recommended that these are reviewed annually as part of meeting your new Reps, to decide a mutually reasonable timeframe for an initial response

\*The section headings cannot currently be edited

**Archive** – after 90 days, a closed feedback post will be automatically archived in this section.

**Members** – lists all the staff, students, and Reps with access to your board.

**Together We Changed** – this page lists feedback posts that lead to a notable change or improvement in a programme, or the department. This page lets students see the value of their feedback and how the community of staff and students have made positive changes in response.

# Engaging with student feedback posts

Nominate staff “first responders”

A student feedback post can only be escalated to the Public, open area of the board by a Student Rep. Once this happens, all staff with the **Feedback escalated to open** setting enabled will receive an email notification. Consider the Opened column of the board, as essentially a holding area for new posts.

One approach to managing student posts is to have only one or two staff members enable this setting, who are willing to act as “first responders” (usually as Board Admins). They will read any new posts that are opened, and route them to the appropriate member of staff/team if they’re unable to provide a resolution.

Opening a feedback post

Along with the content of the message, on opening a post you will be able to review the following:

* Whether the author posted anonymously or not.
* The **Category** the student/rep assigned to it e.g. Assessments (next to the Title of the post)
* The type of feedback it is – Praise, Issue, Question, Idea.
* If it’s an Issue, a **Suggested Solution** (students are prompted to create one).
* If it’s an Idea, a **Proposed Plan of Action** (students are prompted to create one).
* In the **Discussion** area underneath the initial feedback, any comments from students.
* In the **Updates** area any further context added by the Rep (this is optional).
* The number of **Votes** the feedback has received (thumbs up/down).
* In the **Details** area the number of times the post has been **Viewed** by all users, the **Audience** this applies to, such as a specific programme or the entire Board (e.g. the department) and **Assignee** – which member of staff is dealing with this.
* **Seen By** indicates the number of individual students (and staff) who have viewed the post. This differs from **Views** which is a simple view count. Views and Seen By can help indicate engagement, by how many different students have seen the post and are checking for updates.

Assigning a feedback post (Board Admin)

At this initial stage, a Board Admin can either assign the feedback post to themselves to respond to, or another member of staff to review. This can be done through the following steps:

From the **Choose an action** menu > Select **Assign** > From Assignee menu select Assign Myself/another staff member > An optional message can be included, which is added to the email notification the staff member receives

Providing an update

When engaging with student feedback, especially a new post, it's essential to provide at least an acknowledgement within the expected staff response time (you can adjust the timing on the About page). You can also post a comment asking students to clarify or provide additional information.

If you cannot give an answer at this stage, or progress this via another staff member, then select **Post as Update** to provide more context to the students. You also have the option to choose a new expected **Response date** if you're awaiting more information, and you can also target the students this affects through **Notify audience**. For example:

* *Thank you for raising this suggestion. As there is considerable student support in the comments, I’ve requested this is added to the agenda for discussion at the upcoming Departmental Teaching Committee meeting. I will update you on whether this is possible when the agenda is confirmed in the next couple of weeks.*
* *Thank you for raising this issue on the XYZ Programme. Unfortunately, Prof X, who organises this, is on annual leave until the end of the month. I will raise this feedback with them when they return and hope to provide an update early next month.*

## Using the In Progress column

If you choose to assign a student feedback post to another staff member to act on, then click and drag the post from the Opened area to **In Progress**, to show students there has been a development.

This will bring up the **Actions to move this feedback into In Progress** pop-up screen:

* **Select NSS/PTES Category:** if you cannot identify the relevant NSS/PTES category the feedback applies to, then select Other.
* **Feedback Category:** the student has already selected this as part of creating their feedback post. This can also be changed by choosing a new category, which is useful if the student has selected the wrong category (e.g. *Modules*, when their feedback is about *Assessment*).
* **Assignee & Optional Message:** select an assignee and include an optional message to them:
* *Hi Prof, please see student feedback on Shape UCL that relates to your programme, can you provide students with an update in the next seven days?*
* **When can students expect the next update?**: the default **next update** is the number of days set in your About page. If the staff response time is set to five days, then the next update will be five days’ time. If you know the query will take more time to resolve, then you can adjust the timing accordingly and notify the students.

For example:

* *Thank you for your feedback about additional lab practicals. Your Module Leader has agreed to schedule these once the lab team have identified room availability. Please expect an update by next Tuesday.*
* *Thank you for your feedback regarding the assessment hand-in arrangement for XYZ Programme. This has been assigned to the Assessment team, who will provide an update on this post before reading week.*

If a feedback post is taking longer to resolve than expected, use **Post as Update** to advise students on the cause of the delay, and when to expect an outcome by adjusting the **Response date** accordingly.

For example, continuing the example above:

* *The Assessment team has reviewed the request regarding a change to the assessment hand-in arrangement for XYZ Programme. This has been escalated to the Chair of the Examination Committee, and we expect a decision to be reached at the next meeting on 21 March.*

## Closing a post as Together We Changed

When a feedback post reaches a resolution, you need to move it to the **Closed** area. This is done by clicking and dragging the post into the Closed column.

This will bring up the **Close feedback** pop-up screen:

* **NSS/PTES Category:** review what was previously selected, or select a new category.
* **A change was made:** toggle to on, if something changed in the department, faculty or university as a result of this piece of student feedback.

*When this option is selected you will be prompted to complete the following fields, which will be uploaded as a post on the Together We Changed (TWC) page:*

* **Title:** create a headline that summarises the change, or positive result the feedback led to. For example: *New locker space for students / Past papers provided as revision aid for Final Year students / New computer installed in study area / Department Coffee & Cake Socials launched / Leavers’ event organised / Time management courses arranged to support students.*
* **Summarise how and what changed:** use this space to briefly summarise the problem identified by students in the original post, and how this was addressed by staff. For example:
* *Following a request for additional locker space in the department, an area was identified on the Ground Floor, West Wing. 50 new lockers will be available at the start of Term 2.* *Please email your programme administrator for more information on reserving a locker.*
* **Notify audience:** you can choose to target the students this change directly affected (e.g. a change that occurred on a programme) or advertise the change more widely to the entire board (e.g. new end of year social events for all students).

After the post is published on a TWC page, students have the option to “like” it, effectively recognising the impact of Shape UCL in making a change.

Suggestions

* Together We Changed is a great feature to advertise and celebrate those opportunities where a change was possible, or a student suggestion was implemented.
* Your TWC entries are a handy resource for Closing the Loop activities, highlighting positive changes in your programmes or the wider department.
* While the original feedback post is linked to in the post, don’t rely on students re-reading the original post as the content are not always easy to follow. Creating an engaging TWC summary is far more effective for the reader!
* Don’t overlook your changes! TWC entries don’t have to be as dramatic as a new social area, or teaching space. Changes on the platform have included new social events for students and alumni, updating teaching facilities and improving online resources, new dining options, new revision resources, new lockers, adjustments around assessments due to clashes/congestion, and plenty more!
* If you’re using your board to make general announcements, such as encouraging participation in surveys, changes in opening hours or closure dates, avoid closing them as a TWC. These should either be deleted after the relevant period has passed or closed using the steps in the next section.

Closing a post (without a change)

In the event a change wasn’t possible, the students’ feedback still needs to be closed. Click and drag the post into the Closed column, and follow these steps:

In the **Close feedback** pop-up screen:

* **NSS/PTES Category:** review what was previously selected, or select a new category
* **A change was made:** leave this switched off (the default setting is off)
* **Resolution:** in some circumstances, it is impossible to make the change requested by students due to UCL/external regulations or other factors or limitations. The matter may also be outside of the department's control. It is crucial to communicate to students that their concerns have been heard and explain why a change wasn't possible. If the situation can be mitigated in the meantime, provide that detail. If a change will take much longer to bring about than the students anticipated, include this in your response so students know that staff are considering the issue, or making headway. For example:
* *Unfortunately, the request from students to move Module X lectures to a larger room isn't possible this term due to the renovations taking place in the entire building. This room is already the largest we have available to us. However, we have identified a larger room for Term 2, based on the main campus. This will be included in the timetables for next Term.*
* *The request for the Graduation ceremony to be held at the Royal Festival Hall (which had lots of student support) was forwarded to the UCL Ceremonies team as this is beyond the department’s control. They have confirmed that the venue will be the IOE. Any other queries regarding this year’s ceremony should be forward to <email address>.*
* *The request around a change in the assessment for Module Y cannot be made as the examinations are confirmed in advance of the academic year. We will however give the proposal consideration at the next Departmental Teaching Committee meeting, which your Reps will be attending.*

* **Notify audience:** you can choose to target the students the feedback directly affected, or share the change with the entire board.

Additional information

* When a student creates a new feedback post, the platform will prompt if there is already an existing post like it, and its status (Open, In Progress, Closed) to help avoid duplication. You can also direct students to closed posts if the issue has been raised before, by providing a link to the post in your response.
* Once a post has closed students will no longer be able to add comments to it.

After 90 days the post will move to the Archive page. If a student posts with their name in the original post, or comment thread, this is later updated to *Anonymous* once they have left UCL. Likewise, for a member of staff, their name no longer displays in the archived post if they leave and have their account removed.

# Creating a feedback post

Starting a feedback post is a good way to start the conversation on Shape UCL. Seeing Reps and staff take the lead encourages students to engage with the platform and to post their own feedback.

You can request feedback from students in the form of a question, presenting an idea, or posting an update.

You can create a feedback post at any time, through the following steps:

* Click **Request Feedback** > Select the **Feedback Type** > Praise, Issue, Question or Idea
* **Title:** provide a description of what you’re posting about
* **Details:** provide further detail and any other relevant information
* If you’re posting about an Issue, you will be prompted to **Suggest a solution**
* If you’re posting about an Idea, you will be prompted to **Produce an action plan**
* **Category:** select from the list of topics
* **Audience:** select whether this post applies to a specific programme or the entire board

Some examples:

**Praise:** *A big congratulations to our final-year undergraduates who've secured us an excellent 70% response rate in this year's NSS! This achievement has earned the department up to £1500 in additional funds! Thank you! Please use the comments section below for suggestions on how we should use the funding.*

**Praise:** *Thank you to the student who suggested in their module feedback that we get an institutional license for XYZ software to help students with their design assignments. We're pleased to announce that this is available and accessed through the following site.*

**Issue:** *We’ve been made aware of an issue with the automatic fire alarm testing taking place later than usual and interrupting teaching in the ground floor seminar rooms. We have raised the issue with Estates and will post an update here once these have been fixed. Sorry for the disruption!*

**Issue:** *During this morning's lecture, students made us aware that the assessment guidelines were missing from our Moodle page! Very sorry! We've now updated our Moodle page to include these. If you have any queries on the assessment, please drop them in the comments below.*

**Question:** *Dear students, welcome to our department! We’d like to know a little bit more about how your induction week went. What did you find most useful? Do you know who to go to for questions? What could we improve for next year? Let us know in the comments below!*

**Question:** *Dear students, we have implemented the following changes to our programme including… x… y… z… based on feedback from last year’s cohort. Please lets us know in the comments below whether you’ve found these changes beneficial.*

**Idea:** *Dear students, we have some funding available that we’d like to put towards an end-of-year social event, so let’s hear your ideas! We’ll be monitoring this post for ideas until 28Feb and will get back to you shortly after to confirm what we have arranged.*

**Idea:** *Dear students, we’re considering a proposal from the SU to participate in a pilot to hold our rep elections for next year at the end of this current academic year. What do you think of this idea? Let us know in the comments below.*

# Anonymity

Shape UCL has the option for students to feedback anonymously, similarly to how they provide feedback in student surveys. This functionality makes students feel comfortable providing expressing themselves without fear of being singled out or judged. Sharing feedback is vital to improving every student’s academic experience.

In a recent student survey (July 2022) about the Shape UCL platform, 86% of respondents agreed that Students should have the option to post without their name being visible. In another question, just 8% of students said they’d Posted without using the anonymity function on the platform.

A sample of participants’ comments on why students value the platform’s anonymity functionality:

* *The ability to comment/vote anonymously. It creates a safe environment to give and receive feedback.*
* *I like that we have a way to express our concerns or ideas anonymously and can see whether other students agree as well.*
* *I like the anonymity option, as it allows students to feel safe to express concerns.*
* *You can anonymously ask questions on there and have other people comment to say if they're facing a similar issue. For example, around exam time, someone said they were worried about exams and it made me feel like it wasn't just me worrying about them.*
* *Regardless of its shortcomings it is a useful tool. Without it we don't have a mechanism which enables anonymous posting and voting.*

These views were consistent in student focus groups held about the platform. Students mentioned concerns over how their peers perceived their query (*am I asking a silly question?*) and potential staff reactions to raising concerns, which the anonymity feature helped them negate.

Some students have observed that anonymity occasionally led to rude or childish behaviour on Shape UCL, both in the Private and Public areas of boards, creating an environment not always conducive to co-operation between students or staff.

To help address this concern, updated guidance and training sessions for Reps will focus strongly on the moderation aspects of the platform. Students in general should familiarise themselves with the [Community Guidelines](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/shape-ucl-community-guidelines), which apply to all users, and call out any inappropriate content using the reporting tools available.

Posting without anonymity

We are looking at new ways to encourage students to explore creating feedback posts and commenting without anonymity. To feel confident expressing their opinion amongst their peers, engaging staff, or providing constructive feedback.

For example, creating a Praise post is a comfortable place to start, as it's an excellent way for students to acknowledge something they've enjoyed and for other students to join in and show appreciation.

If any students post or comment with their name, acknowledge that in your response, *"Hi James, thanks for your feedback"* or *"Thanks for raising this, Erin"*, to help keep the tone positive and friendly.

# Moderating posts

Moderation is key to maintaining a healthy and constructive environment on Shape UCL. All users are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the new [Community Guidelines](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/shape-ucl-community-guidelines), and report inappropriate content when they see it. However, only Reps and staff members can remove posts.

In the new Guidelines, students are advised to convey issues or questions clearly and factually in their Shape UCL posts. Students are also advised to avoid making accusations or using humour or sarcasm that can get easily misinterpreted online.

Private area moderation

Renewed guidance issued to Reps this year will help to reduce the number of escalated posts that need moderation. Some issues may still arise in the comments, which this section will provide some suggestions for handling.

Keep in touch!

In the recent student survey, students three areas where they'd like to see improvement in the platform. The three most selected options were:

* Levels of engagement from staff: 55%
* Clarity and quality of staff responses: 40%
* Response times by staff: 38%

These results tallied with responses in the student focus groups. Students felt that staff weren't taking their concerns seriously if they had to wait 20+ days for an initial response. Other students felt staff did not fully engage with their problems if a post received a "stock" response, especially if their post was closed almost immediately. Eventually, students with these experiences tended to view the platform negatively, or completely disengaged with it.

The following recommendations have been made:

* Once feedback is in the Open area, it is crucial to acknowledge the response within your given timeframes. Otherwise, students will feel ignored and disappointed.
* Aim for a personal tone in your responses. Leading by example will help students model the type of communication expected.
* Keep students updated if something is taking longer to resolve. Explaining can alleviate most potential frustrations.
* Be clear in your updates. This will help to manage student expectations.

Gentle warning

Frustrations occasionally boil over, and some students may use emotional language in their posts, so we recommend considering this when reviewing posts, or comments. When a student post or reply stretches the Guidelines, or Unitu’s own [Content Policy](https://unitu.co.uk/content-policy/), one approach is to issue a gentle warning. Acknowledge that feelings are running high in your response or signpost them back to the Community Guidelines when closing this post. For example:

* *We appreciate that students were frustrated that the lecture slides were unavailable for the first few weeks of Term. We understand the disappointment about the time this has taken to resolve. While this is a valid criticism, we would like to remind students to express their concerns more constructively and courteously in the future.*

## Removing content

In some circumstances, removing entire posts or comments from your board will be necessary, and while the procedure is the same, there are several different approaches to doing this.

As staff and Reps have the same moderation controls on the platform, they are jointly referred to as moderators. The *Managing the board with your Reps* section covers the moderator role, and how you might share it with your Reps in more detail.

* **See it, sort it!**

If you see something that doesn’t feel right, don’t leave it there. Help keep Shape UCL a positive and safe space by moderating breaches in the Community Guidelines as quickly as possible. Leaving rude, offensive or aggressively written comments open for too long has a disruptive effect and can put off other students or staff. While sarcasm or banter might be considered a “grey area”, these comments are often counterproductive, and if left unchecked can encourage similar comments which continue to lower the tone.

To remove a comment:

* Click the … icon, next to the comment > Click **Remove** >

This will bring up the **Close this Report** pop-up screen:

* Click **Remove this content (with no strike for author)** OR click **Remove this content (with strike for author)**
* **Please select your reason for removing this content:** by using the drop-down list
* **Please give a short explanation for your decision:** to inform the student that their comment fell below the standards expected on Shape UCL and why. This will usually be a breach in the [Community Guidelines](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/shape-ucl-community-guidelines), so provide a link to them in your explanation as a reminder.

If the offending comment breached Unitu’s [Content Policy](https://unitu.co.uk/content-policy/), [Dignity at UCL](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/equality-diversity-inclusion/dignity-ucl) or the [Code of Conduct for Students](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/academic-manual/chapters/chapter-6-student-casework-framework/section-1-code-conduct-students), include a link to the relevant policy. Removing the content (with a strike) might be a more appropriate reprimand and strikes are covered later in this section.

To remove a post:

* Open the offending post > click the bin icon at the end of the post > Click **Remove** >

This will bring up the same **Close this Report** pop-up screen, as above.

Once the report is closed the content will automatically be removed, and the author of the content will be informed of the reason you’ve given to remove it.

* **Reported content**

Students are encouraged through their guidance and the Community Guidelines to be active participants in helping to keep Shape UCL a safe space. They can do this in both the Private or Public areas of the board, by clicking the flag icon next to a comment or post.

After flagging content, they will complete a **Report this Content** form to help moderators understand their concerns.

Moderators will receive an email notification to review this report in the Reported Content area of the Board.

Reported content can be managed through the following steps:

* In the left-hand side of the screen, under **Moderation** click > **Reported Content**

In the **Reported Content** screen, you will be able to review a table of all reported content for your board, under the following headings:

* **Time Reported:** the date report was made.
* **Feedback Status:** where the reported comment or post is on the board.
* **Reported Content:** a clickable link to the reported content.
* **Reason for Report:** rude, offensive, abusive, disruptive, breaches Unitu Content Policy.
* **Current location:** usually the name of your board.
* **Feedback ID:** a tag created by Unitu to identify the post.
* Find the post in question on this table (usually at the top) and click **Reported Content.**
* You can read the comment that has been flagged and use **View Context** for further context.
* In the top right-hand corner of your screen the moderator will be required to **Take Action.**
* Select the appropriate action, Remove with no strike, Remove with a strike, or Don’t remove and then click > **Close this Report.**
* If the option to remove the comment or post is selected, this will bring up the **Close this Report** screen, which can be completed via the steps on the previous page.
* If the **Don’t remove** option is selected, the moderator will be required to **Give a short explanation for your decision** form, which the report-ee will receive.
* **Issuing a strike | Three strike policy**

For serious breaches of the [Community Guidelines](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/shape-ucl-community-guidelines), Unitu’s [Content Policy](https://unitu.co.uk/content-policy/), [Dignity at UCL](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/equality-diversity-inclusion/dignity-ucl) or the [Code of Conduct for Students](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/academic-manual/chapters/chapter-6-student-casework-framework/section-1-code-conduct-students) a **Strike** can be issued alongside removing the offending content.

* The first strike issued is effectively a “yellow card”. A warning is issued via email to the student explaining why their comment or post was removed, and that a strike was issued in conjunction with that. Unitu has noted that most students quickly adapt their behaviour following this action.
* A second strike issued to the same student will result in them instantly losing the ability to post anonymously.
* In the event a student receives a third strike, their account will be suspended, and they will lose access to Shape UCL. This student will then be put in contact with staff members at VPESE.

If your department has ‘fitness to practice’ considerations, you may have additional steps when a piece of content is reported. Please contact VPESE if you need further support with this.

To date no UCL student has ever received three strikes.

Anonymity controls

Unitu has developed some settings which might prove useful to enable on your board if anonymity misuse is persistent. However, we recommend that these are used only as a last resort, and encourage staff to take the following actions first:

* **Meet your Student Reps:** Having an early meeting with your new Reps can help set expectations on both sides, around how the board is managed. This is covered in more detail in the next section.

Keep in regular contact, so you're aware of any developing issues or persistent problems students are experiencing before they escalate on the board. If provocative posts are continually being Opened by reps, or posts lack moderation, then meet to find out why. If it’s a training need, then additional support can be provided to Reps by VPESE.
* **Take the conversation offline:** If feelings are running high on a certain topic, then consider offering students a specific meeting to discuss their concerns with members of staff.
* **Create a rep/staff post:** Note the issue and stress that better conduct is expected. Students have a responsibility to ensure all UCL spaces are welcoming and inclusive. Signpost the student guidance and Community Guidelines as a reminder. This can be supported by a similar post by your Reps in the Private area around how new posts will be moderated.

<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/you-shape-ucl/shape-ucl-our-student-voice-platform>

<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/shape-ucl-community-guidelines>

* **About page settings:** Consider editing the *“How to make your feedback more effective”* section, as the heading title and bullet points appear when students (and staff) create a new post and can serve as a handy reminder of what not to post.
* **Board size:** A common factor in boards that have experienced continued, inappropriate posting has been size. When we reduced larger boards to several smaller boards, student conduct usually improved. Other Universities taking this action have reported the same. Splitting boards can be done by Year group (grouping all first years, all second years, etc, on separate boards) or by programmes managed by an SSCC group or something else. Contact VPESE for more information on trying this approach.

If these steps don’t significantly improve the standard of dialogue, then the following options are available.

* **Disable anonymity on selected posts:** There is a new feature this year for a Board Admin to disable anonymity on a selected post. Once activated the following alert will be added to comment thread:

*Please note that all further anonymous commenting has been disabled for this feedback, due to Inappropriate comments.* [*Learn how to create constructive feedback*](https://unitu.co.uk/how-to-write-constructive-comments/)

This is a fairly drastic response, so we would recommend moderating offending comments instead, as students could view this option to revoke anonymity on a particular post as a collective punishment for individual indiscretions.

* **Anonymity disabled in Public area:** students can still create a post or add a comment anonymously, but only in the Private area of the board. Once a post is moved to the Public area, students can only add comments with their name visible (the anonymity option is disabled).
* **Anonymity fully disabled:** anonymity is fully disabled in both the Private and Public areas of the board. Students are no longer able to post or comment anonymously.

Currently, none of the 32 UCL departments using the platform have enabled either of these anonymity controls.

If you are considering a change in your board’s anonymity settings, please contact VPESE. Significant changes like this carry the risk of being seen as a punitive measure by students. VPESE can help your department to develop a timeline for enabling this and support with communications to students announcing the change.

# Managing the board with your Reps

Several departments successfully using Shape UCL have reported the value of holding regular meetings with their Reps. This will help to keep you in the loop with any developing issues and support your Reps with any queries they have. Likewise, the Reps can feedback on what students think, and how feedback posts are being managed.

Having an open, constructive dialogue with your Reps can help manage expectations, and keep the board a safe space for student and staff feedback. Some suggestions for how to manage your first meeting are listed below:

* **Congratulations and Introductions!**

Once your Reps have been appointed, send them a congratulatory email, and arrange an informal meeting to introduce them to Shape UCL. This can either be in person, or over Teams depending on preference, and how many Reps your department appoints.

* **Welcome to our board!**

Rep training covers the Shape UCL platform in some detail, but this is an excellent opportunity to give a local introduction and gauge how much your Reps know about the platform. If you’ve already been using Shape UCL for some time, you can go through some of the notable changes in your department on your Together We Changed (TWC) page. This will help the Reps understand the benefits of using the platform and why they should invest time in it.

Some introductory questions to ask:

* Have they used the platform before? If so, what’s been their experience?
* Have they attended any training or read the Rep guidance?
* Have they made an introductory post to students on the platform yet?

Some things to point out:

* Shape UCL is now available to all the students on the programmes you’ve assigned to your board – an excellent way for Reps to connect with their peers.
* Recommend Shape UCL as the official feedback channel for students to reach your Reps, as not all students will have access to the same social media channels.
* While social media apps are popular, not all students feel comfortable raising academic issues there, especially on WhatsApp.
* Encourage your more senior Reps to help your first-year Reps with any queries they’re unsure on whether to progress.
* **Manage expectations**

Outline the kind of requests the Reps are likely to see on your board, what the department can usually accommodate, and the process for handling these posts. You can set expectations around how long things take. Use your About page as a starting point and review the expected response dates for Reps and staff.

* Does the response time set for Reps look reasonable?
* If the staff response time is set for longer explain why
* What kind of posts tend to be resolved by staff? What takes longer?
* What are the known issues that can’t be changed? Are there any longer-term issues the department is already working on?
* **Moderation**

Instances may arise on your board where moderation is required. Both staff and Reps have the same moderator functionality. Some departments have explained how students view Shape UCL as a student-managed space (and Moodle as a staff-managed space) and prefer their Reps to moderate posts and comments. Talk to your reps about what they feel comfortable with and set some ground rules, so inappropriate posts or rude comments aren’t left to linger.

* Remind Reps to moderate posts before they escalate them, that criticism isn’t targeted at individuals, and to screen for offensive language as inappropriate posts will be removed by staff.
* While Reps are responsible for the Private area, discuss how to manage moderation and reported content in the Public area. Will it be staff-led or Rep led? Or a bit of both?
* If you’re taking a mostly Rep-managed approach to moderation, some content might still warrant a staff lead or response.
* At UCL strikes are rarely issued, but again, this might be an action that Reps would prefer staff take the lead on. The recipient is never made aware of who gave the strike, just that they have received one and for the reasons outlined through the Reported Content process.
* **Supporting your Staff Student Consultative Committee (SSCC) process**

Discuss how Shape UCL is used as part of your department’s SSCC process, and how the Rep and staff roles support this. The next section covers this in more detail.

* **Set up your next meeting!**

Or arrange a regular meeting schedule instead. You can adjust the frequency depending on the level of activity on your board. Perhaps where you only have a few Reps, this might be manageable, but if you have more Reps, consider asking the Reps to nominate a few to act as “Shape UCL Reps” for the purpose of these meetings. For example, one Board Admin meeting regularly with one or two Reps, who feedback to the rest of the staff and Rep users.

# Using Shape UCL to support your Staff-Student Consultative Committee (SSCC) process

Staff-Student Consultative Committees are a vital tool in making changes in partnership with students and provide students reassurance that their feedback is valued. Several departments have shared with us how they use the platform to support their SSCC process.

A common approach is to create a standing item on your SSCC agenda for Shape UCL. At the meeting itself, a Board Admin will usually give a verbal report or provide an additional paper on the feedback raised on the platform since the last meeting.

One of the platform's strengths is the ability for students to create in-the-moment feedback, which can act as a type of "pulse check" on student feelings. This summary can provide a picture to the wider department of the kind of issues students need more support with and highlight areas commended through use of praise posts.

Another approach we’re piloting this year is to truly embed Shape UCL into the SSCC process through the following steps:

Prior to the SSCC meeting

Prompt your reps to create an “SSCC call to action post” in the Private area of the board, asking students what they want to raise to staff. The Rep guidance includes this, but a polite reminder before your meeting will help gather representative feedback on areas for change and what’s going well for your committee meeting.

Some Reps prefer using a survey form, and they can still do this on Shape UCL, by including a link to the form as part of their “call to action” post. This will reach more students than an informal WhatsApp group.

At the meeting

Ensure the Reps have a slot with sufficient time to present the feedback raised from their “SSCC call to action post”. Take a note of the actions assigned to these topics so a summary can be posted on Shape UCL.

After the meeting

The staff SSCC Co-Chair should follow up with students with a concise summary of the discussions and action points from the session. This only needs to be a few bullet points highlighting the key feedback from the meeting and how the department plans to respond. This could be posted on Shape UCL as this will generate a notification email to let the whole cohort know.

Where possible, post your SSCC actions on Shape UCL. Students will have better visibility of the issues raised, and staff can give transparency into how the decision was reached. Another advantage is that when a change is possible, this is directly communicated to the relevant students on the platform and stored in the Together We Changed section.