

Communication

The role of the Department Representative is to be a liaison between the Faculty Association Board of Directors and the Department or Faculty.

In order to maintain effective communication, both from and to members, the Association has established regular Department Representative meetings. Through these meetings, discussion can take place on the current issues facing the Association, its members, and the University community.

We all have an obligation to communicate and work together in a safe and abuse-free way. The Faculty Association has a *Policy Against Abusive Conduct* that explains this responsibility in more detail. As a result, we will not tolerate any inappropriate behaviour, which includes offensive or insulting language or behaviour; harassment; abusive or threatening language; or violence. Participants should not make accusatory or vexatious comments. Participants who disrespect these expectations will be asked to leave the meeting.

As Department Representative, the Association encourages you to be diligent in gathering and relaying information in both directions. To facilitate this, we suggest the following approaches:

1. Advise the members of your department/faculty that you are their Representative, and that, as such, you are interested in communicating their views to the Association, and will be informing them of the Board of Directors' priorities, positions and activities. If you are unclear about who are the members of the Faculty Association in your unit, contact the Faculty Association office. Please note that sessional instructors are members of the Association, as are academic administrators below the level of Dean.
2. Attend the scheduled meetings whenever possible. This is the best way to keep informed and share your views and those of your colleagues.
3. Establish an email list of the members you represent, and send summaries of the Department Representative meetings. This can either be based on your own notes or the summary provided in the Department Representative Bulletins. If you use the Department Representative Bulletin for this purpose, we encourage you to write a short preamble or note highlighting what you think is the most important issue. Encourage members to send you their comments or feedback or to forward these directly to the Faculty Association office. Depending on the situation and the urgency of the issue, forward the comments of your colleagues to the Association immediately, or summarize them and bring them to the next Department Representatives meeting.
4. Share the Department Representative Bulletins. The Bulletins are summaries of the discussions that take place at each meeting. Bulletins are published on the Association's web site so that any member can access the information. We suggest circulating the bulletins by email, by hard copy handouts in mailboxes or at department meetings, or by posting them on a bulletin board in a central location.

5. Request that Association issues be placed on the agenda of Departmental or Faculty meetings. This is an excellent opportunity to report on what is happening at Department Representative meetings and receive the input and opinions of the members, as well as responding to any questions they may have.

6. Email or phone the office if you or the members you represent have issues or concerns that the Association can address. The Association is very sensitive to issues of confidentiality. The Association staff work only for the members and are not University employees. Please assure your colleagues that they can be confident that their concerns will be responded to with sensitivity and confidentiality.

If there are any ways that the Association can aid you in communicating more effectively with the members of your unit, please contact us. We would be happy to assist you.

If you have strategies that have worked in developing communication to and from members in your area, please share them with your fellow Department Representatives and the Association. We are always looking for new ways to improve the two-way communication with members.