**Student Support Initiative Award 2018**

**Online Introductory Class Rep Training**

**1) Outline the project or initiative and what makes it innovative and inspiring (max 300 words).**

The online Introductory Class Rep Training resource was launched by the EO Student Engagement team in September 2017.

The need for an online format for class rep training was identified to ensure that all students have equal access to training and that as many students as possible are being trained to carry out their class rep role. It was agreed that the online training would be used in addition to face-to-face class rep training and not as a replacement method of delivery to ensure that the needs of all students are being met.

The online training resource has been made available to students who are studying at a distance, or wholly online, and also to students who have not been able to attend allocated face-to-face training sessions due to other commitments or circumstances. The resource is also being used as a reference resource by class reps who were trained in a face-to-face setting, but can access the resource throughout the year to refer to and support them in their class rep role.

UHI is one of three universities in Scotland to have developed this innovative approach to class rep training. The development of online class rep training recognises and responds to the diversity of our student population by creating opportunities and resources to ensure inclusive practice in representation and associated training.

Working in partnership with the university’s Educational Development Unit (EDU) ensured that the resource was of high quality, with engaging and interactive elements to help inspire students.

At the end of the training, students are tested on their knowledge through a short quiz and upon completing an evaluation of their training experience they are recognised and rewarded for their effort in the form of an electronic certificate issued to their Blackboard achievements.

**2) Detail how the project or initiative was delivered, from the planning stage through to its successful conclusion (max 300 words). Include details of timing\* and funding.**

An EDU Instructional Designer led the technical design process. The partnership-wide Class Rep Group and HISA played an important role as consultees throughout the development process.  In addition, sparqs provided helpful feedback throughout to ensure that the resource achieved all the intended outcomes.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Date | Activity |
| June 2016 | The first meeting of the partnership-wide Class Rep Group was held where it was agreed to take forward the development of an online class rep training resource. |
| Oct – Nov 2016 | The planning stage, which included investigation into:  Where best to store the online resource and how students would access it.  Ensuring training is available to students on all mobile devices.  Ensuring there is an element of recognition and reward.  Ensuring students could access training as and when required.  Ensuring progress and activity could be tracked/recorded.  Adapting group work exercises to an online format.  Ensuring a Gaelic version of the resource is available. |
| Nov – Dec 2016 | sparqs face-to-face materials were adapted to an online format and additions were made to include HISA and UHI-specific information. |
| Jan - Feb 2017 | EDU developed and published a first draft of the resource. |
| Mid-Feb 2017 | Draft resource circulated to Class Rep Group for comments. |
| Mid-April 2017 | Meeting with sparqs to gather feedback on resource. |
| Apr – May 2017 | Resource updated based on feedback gathered. |
| June 2017 | English version of resource complete – testing undertaken by various staff to ensure all elements were in working order.  Progress report to Class Rep Group meeting and discussion about how to implement the training. |
| August 2017 | Gaelic version of resource complete and testing undertaken by a staff member at SMO. |
| Mid-Sept 2017 | Online Introductory Class Rep Training launched. |

As this was an internal project there was no cost involved or funding required.

**3) Outline the project or initiative’s impact within the university and beyond with relevant supporting evidence, metrics or testimony where appropriate (max 400 words).**

Since the launch of the Introductory Class Rep Training 61 students have enrolled onto the module from across all levels of courses, from access courses, NC, HNC, Degree to PGT. This range demonstrates how accessible and relevant the training is to students at all levels of study.

Statistics also demonstrate that those who have enrolled are a mix of online students and students who study face-to-face on campus which supports our aim in reaching both of these groups of students.

Through monitoring user activity with the module it has been noted that a number of students are accessing the module on a regular basis which demonstrates that class reps are indeed using the module as a reference resource to support them in their role.

Feedback from students undertaking the online training has been extremely positive. Students have commented upon the design of the resource and layout of information, stating that is easy to follow and understand. They also felt that the information included was very informative with good advice, direction and resources. Students also commented on the convenience of the training and that they valued being able to do it in their own time and at their own pace.

Within their feedback, students have provided thoughts about what they will do differently as a consequence of the training, demonstrating that the training has made a positive impact on them and allowed them to think about how they can carry out their role more effectively.

Delivering Class Rep Training through an online format is becoming a growing trend within the sector and this has led to sparqs developing a toolkit to assist colleges and universities to develop online training. The toolkit is currently in draft form and there is an opportunity for the university to share best practice on how we developed and implemented our training. In addition to the toolkit, sparqs are also writing a guidance document to support ‘Engaging Students in Online Distance Learning’ and the university has submitted 2 case studies to be included within this document; one featuring the development of the online class rep training resource and the other focusing on how the resource has been used to support staff training and development in understanding the role of the class rep.

The university has also been asked to present our online class rep training at a forthcoming meeting of the sparqs Academic Representation Co-ordinators Network.