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Course reps are dead horses. Stop flogging them

Your course rep system doesn't work, and it never will. Ever.

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JIM DICKINSON | WONKHE @JIM_DICKINSON |
JIM@WONKHE.COM

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A little history

- Course reps were introduced in the late 70s and early 80s when UK universities operated with typewriters, noticeboards, and fixed line telephones.
- They facilitated communication between students and academics who had considerable autonomy.
- The world has changed with the National Student Surveys, comprehensive data dashboards, mid-module and end-of-module feedback, and social media insights.
- Modern technology allows universities to monitor student engagement and predict outcomes without direct interaction.
- Course rep systems were initially popular, declined in the late 80s, and resurged with the Quality Assurance Agency's influence in the 90s.
- The emphasis on structured systems hindered creativity, prioritizing "systems" over true "partnership" in addressing student experiences.

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There’s too many of them and not enough of you

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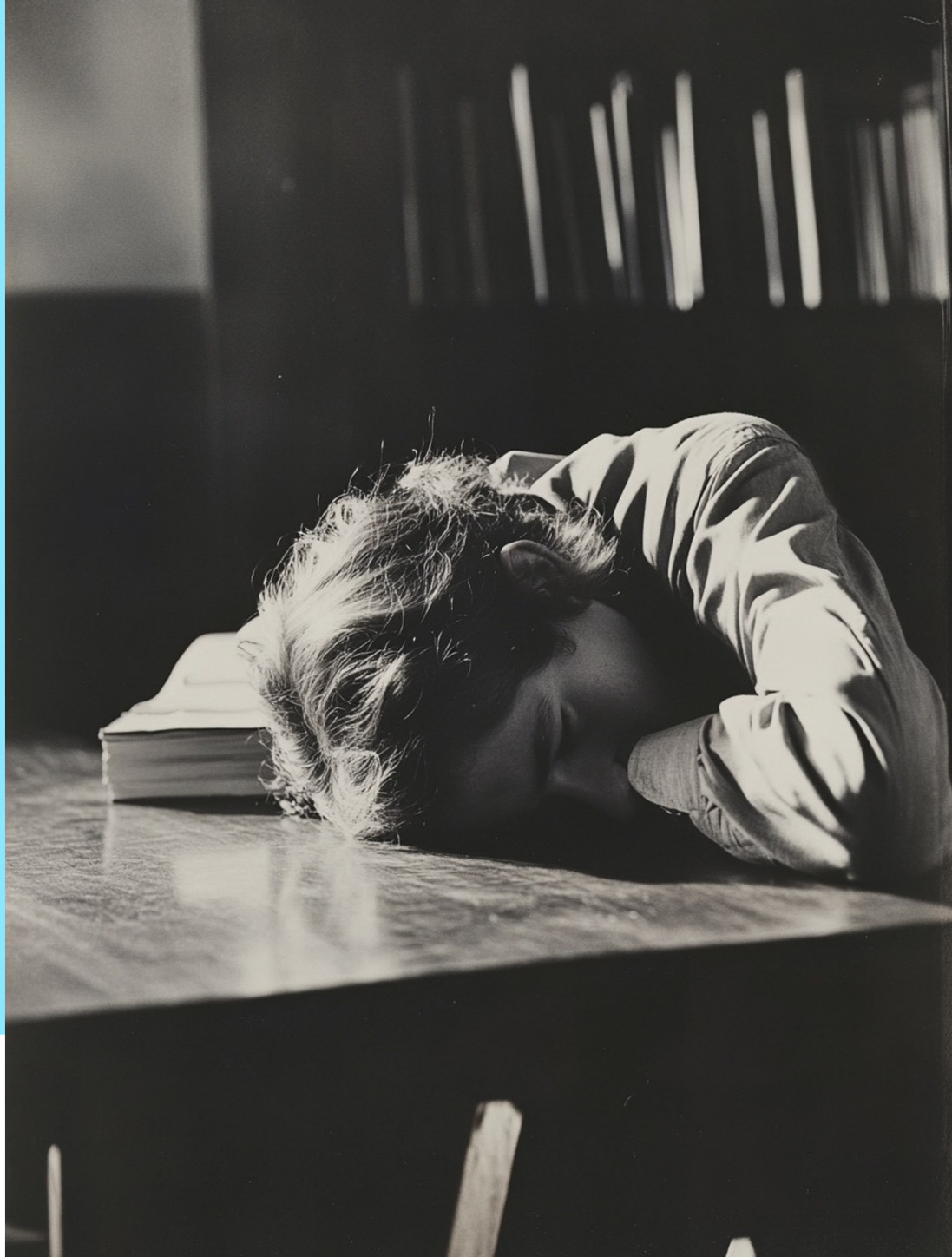
The folded arms problem



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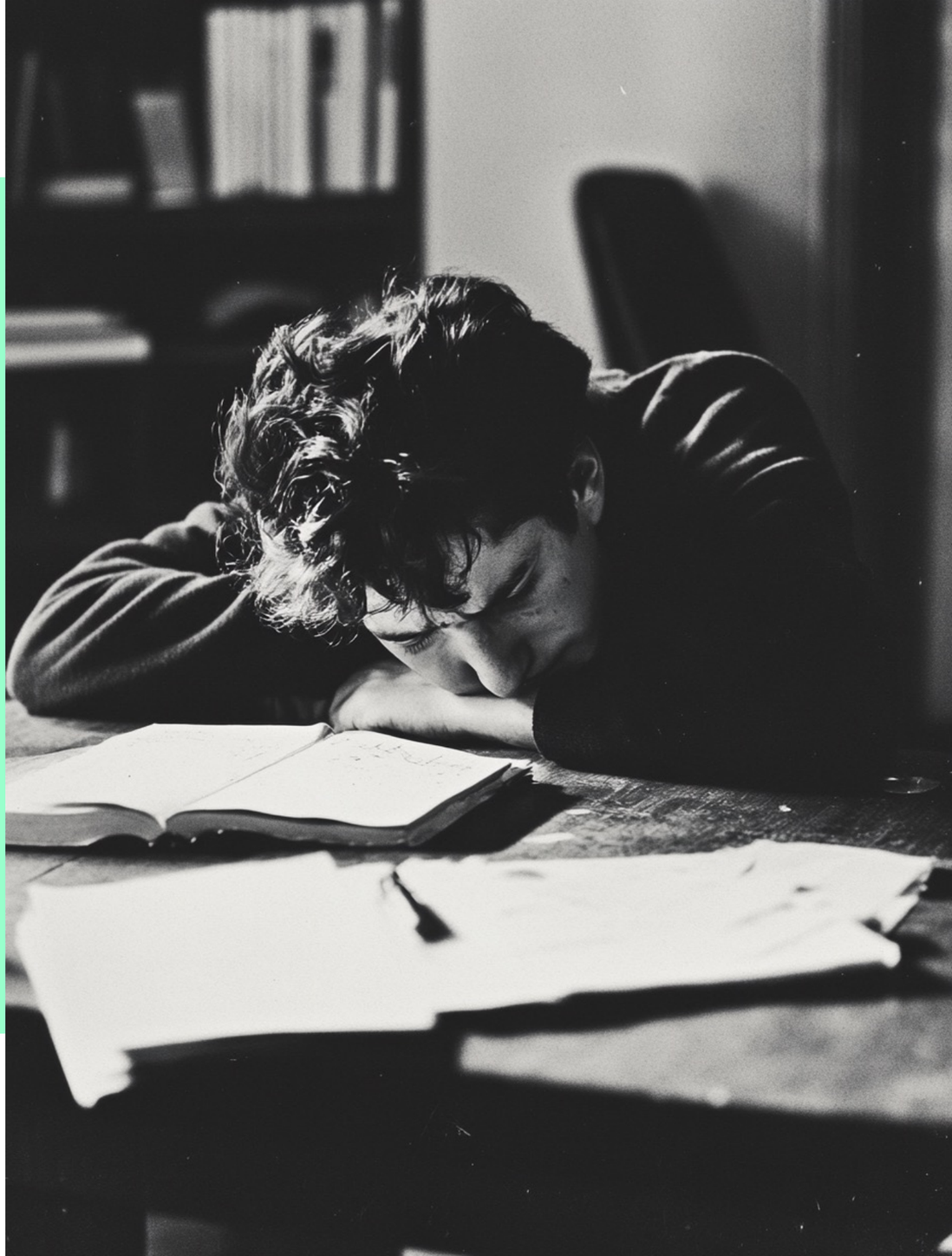
Other evidence is available



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They’re not enabled to make judgements

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Systems dissipate problems rather than cause action

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It’s about the university not students

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Voice doesn’t work for unacceptables

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Decisions aren’t made at their level

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It’s not the role they wanted

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They’re on their own

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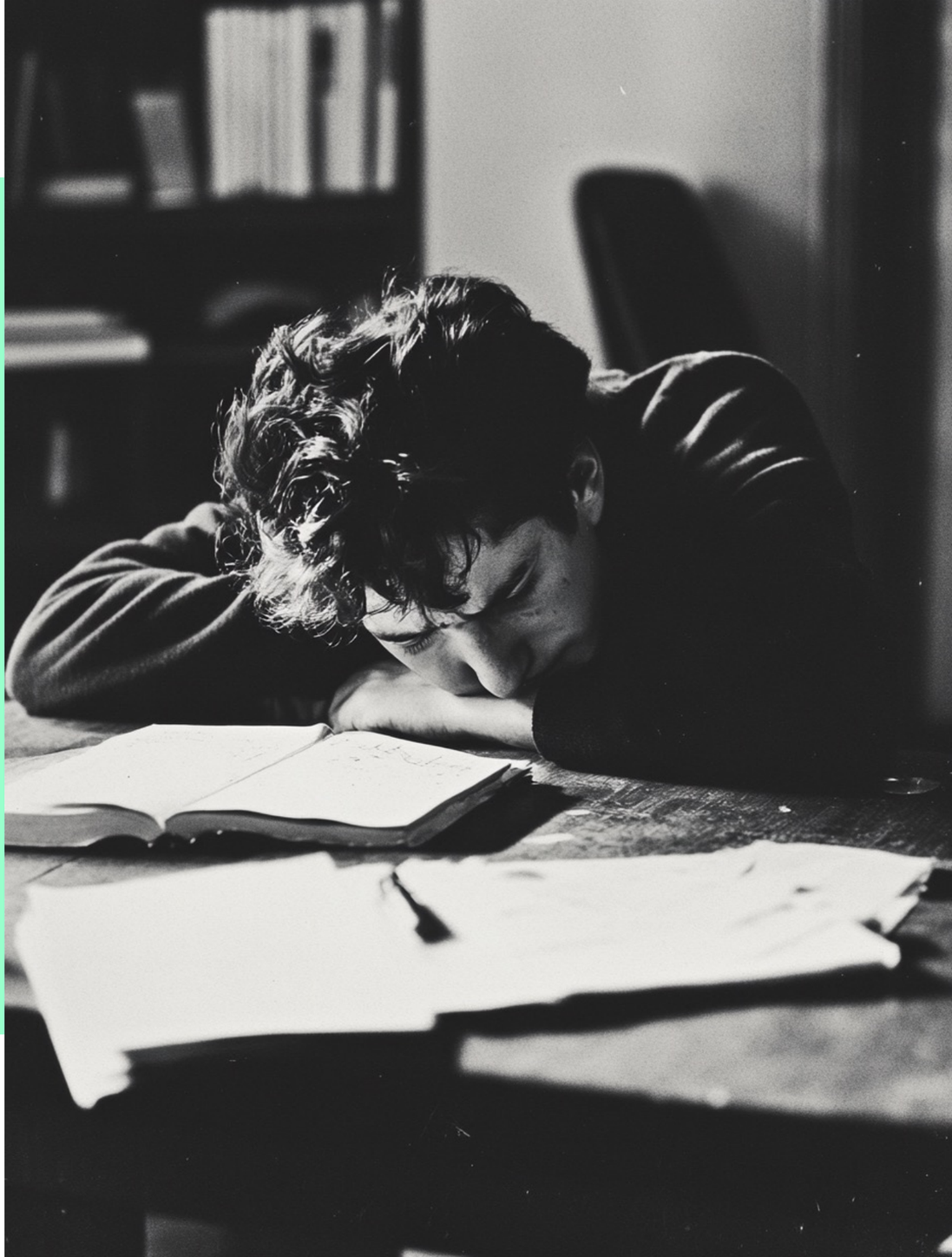
Meetings are awkward or pointlessly comforting



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Decisions aren’t made at their level

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There’s no link to the democratic structures

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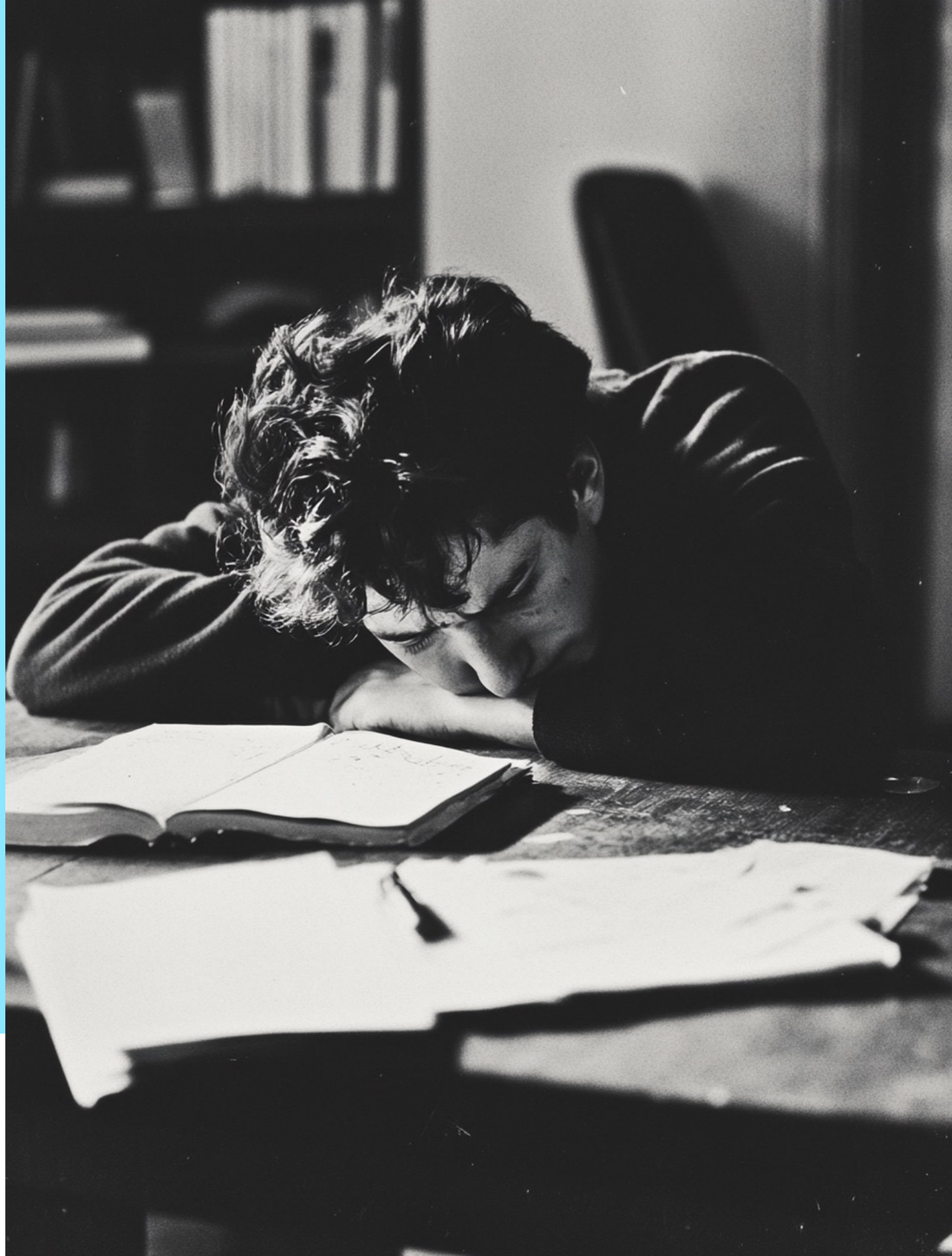
They don’t have the time



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They don’t know enough people

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We persist with electing them

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They miss minority issues

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They over-focus on minority issues

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It’s really really boring

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They don’t change anything

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What could be done?

- Groups, groups, groups
    - Identity, priority, support, agenda
- Compulsory module evaluation (inc engagement reflection)
- In the room where decisions are made
- Link back to democratic structures
- Multiple “helpful” roles
- Who wants to be involved?
- Codes, standards and judgements
- Acting on evidence not sources of evidence
- Loop closure
- Unacceptables OUT
- Clarity over role of curriculum
- Shared resp over success of a cohort

Blogs and explainers

This one simple trick could change your rep system forever
A round up of student influence, voice and representation policies from our eurotours
The five frames of student representation
There are too many student reps in this country. And also not enough
Yes but what do students think?
#SUFutures – Course reps were the future once
This new model could be great for course reps wanting to make a difference
Why aren't we giving student reps the data they need?
Student engagement in quality assurance reviews
Ten ways to improve institution-level student representation