

Academic Representatives: Post Graduate Research Students

Context

Academic Representatives (reps) are crucial to the ability of the University to hear student concerns and make effective change. The feedback from a rep's cohort that is shared with the institution enables the University to better understand your experience and how it can be improved. Working with a team of like-minded people you can make real improvements that benefit current students, and those still to come. Reps are current students, (at all levels,) providing a clear and transparent way of holding the University to account.

Why become a PGR Rep?

To represent the views of your cohort in relation to research, supervision and facilities to the School, College and ultimately the University.

While there may well be generic issues around funding, support etc. it is important that you recognise that you are not an advisor and specific, personal queries and/or personal guidance to individuals on these types of matters should be referred to the experts in the University, e.g. wellbeing services, careers hub etc. (You might however, want to report a general point that stipends are not being paid on time or that there is an increase in mental ill health across your school for example.)

You will also develop skills and build experience through being a rep that will continue to be valuable. These include

- Organisation and time management
- Communication
- Teamwork
- Negotiation
- Public speaking
- Confidence
- Problem solving

Expectations: School/Department PGR Reps

- Complete the rep induction and training provided by the Students' Union
- Engage with your peers, face-to-face or online, to ascertain the feedback that you need to give
- Work with other PGR reps in your College to collect and collate feedback so that it may be used to effect change
- Attend meetings with PGR tutor, PGR Director, College PGR rep (and others invited as required) to share that anonymised feedback as appropriate. See your College's section below for further details
- Attend other meetings by request
- To engage with the doctoral College and other relevant services to enhance the PGR experience
- To feedback to your peers the results of these discussions enabling them to consider if additional action is necessary
- To encourage your peers to access support services and other provision as required

- To organise and/or support informal events aimed at building community within your school/Department, e.g. coffee mornings, film screenings, trips out etc. In the past, PGR reps have organised induction events.

The minimum term for a rep is usually 12 months and you can stay in role for up to three years. PGR students (ideally) need to have completed a year of their doctorate before applying to be a rep.

Within the **College of Life Sciences**, school/department PGR reps will be expected to:

- Attend meetings with the school/department PGR tutor on a regular basis
- Attend key department/school meetings where PGR representation is required
- Co-chair, with the PGR tutor, a forum for school/department PGR students to feedback issues and seek advice, at least once per semester.
- Attend meetings with department PGR reps across the college, chaired by the college PGR rep, at least once per semester.
- Contribute to the organisation of an annual department PGR event (e.g. PGR conference, PGR/ECR away day, or PGR component of a departmental conference).

Within the **College of Science and Engineering**, school/department PGR reps will be expected to attend:

- **School PGR Forums:** These are held every 3 months and are chaired by PGR tutors. All PGR students are invited, but PGR reps will report the collective views of the PGR community.
- **PGR Tutor meetings:** These informal meetings between PGR tutors and reps will take place 4-5 times per year and will provide early discussions of School, College and University level policies in advance of discussion with the broader PGR community. They are informal and may be used to raise any topics.
- **College PGR rep meetings:** These are held every 3 months where PGR reps from all Schools in College of Science and Engineering are invited to raise and discuss any issues, particularly at a college level.

Within the **College of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities**, school/department PGR reps will be expected to:

- *Info to follow*

College PGR Reps

College reps are the official representatives of their college PGR cohort at College and University level meetings. They play an important role in the development of the PGR experience and staff appreciate and value their contribution.

In addition to the supporting and enabling the duties listed above, and alongside school and Department reps, the College reps are expected to:

- Coordinate feedback from within the College and work with the PGR director to solve issues
- Present issues that cannot be solved locally at higher levels, e.g. the doctoral College and/or University
- Advise at College/University level on how potential developments may impact PGR students
- Attend and engage with committees such as a College Research and Enterprise Committee and/or the University PGR sub-committee (PGRSC).

While the workload varies across the year, it is expected the School/Department PGR Rep role may take up to 50 hours. The PGR College Rep role may take a little more.