



# **Code of Practice for Student Representation for Research Students**

# University of Bristol and University of Bristol Students' Union

## Code of Practice for Student Representation for Research Students

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### Context and purpose

1. The University of Bristol (the University) and Bristol Students' Union (Bristol SU) are committed to partnership between staff and students. One feature of this partnership is a system of student representation, this Code of Practice relates to those formal structures relating to research students. The student representation system is operated in partnership between the University and Bristol SU. Effective, democratic student representation is one of the University's key commitments to its student body, outlined in the University's Vision and Strategy, and Education Strategy.
2. Student representation plays an integral role in quality assurance and enhancement. The University and Bristol SU are committed to providing effective structures for student feedback and representation to help ensure the relevance of our programmes, increase student satisfaction, and develop strong academic communities.
3. This Code of Practice (hereafter referred to as 'the Code' within this document) recognises the differences and complexities of research programmes whilst ensuring that every University research student is effectively represented to the University and Bristol SU and so that through effective representation students become partners in their education, allowing a more active involvement in, and ownership of, their learning<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The [Student Partnership Vision](#) compliments this Code and outlines the institutional vision for student representation and engagement in educational processes.

4. This Code is for University and Bristol SU staff and research student representatives and is designed to help establish the working relationships within which we operate.
5. This Code applies to all research students including those in collaborative arrangements and doctoral training entities (DTEs). This Code stands alongside the Code of Practice for Student Representation for Taught Students.
6. Further guidance and support for implementing this Code is available from the Bristol SU's Representation Team and Education Services: Academic Quality & Policy Office.
7. Any requests to depart from this Code must be approved by the Associate PVC (PGR) or the relevant Graduate Faculty Education Director.

## **Responsibilities**

### 8. Bristol SU responsibilities:

- 8.1. To designate a specific point of contact for research (PGR) student representation within Bristol SU for schools, faculties and Education Services.
- 8.2. To ensure PGR representatives are aware of their role in Bristol SU democratic processes, how they can feed into institutional level student representation processes including the Postgraduate Network and its representative activities, and any further opportunities to act as representatives.
- 8.3. To coordinate the online election and training of PGR faculty representatives.
- 8.4. To arrange any PGR representative elections as requested by faculties, schools, departments or doctoral training entities.
- 8.5. To provide effective institution-wide publicity and support for PGR representative recruitment working with schools and faculties where required.
- 8.6. To deliver initial PGR specific student representative induction training.
- 8.7. To provide optional ongoing training and support for PGR representatives (e.g. covering practical necessities, skills-based training, policy discussion), including faculty or school/department/DTE specific training on request. One-to-one support and advice is also available on request.
- 8.8. To work with Education Services to provide guidance, information and examples of best practice for students and staff (academics and support staff) involved in student representation activity.
- 8.9. To ensure information is available to all staff and students on who holds PGR representative positions and to provide contact information where appropriate.
- 8.10. To collate minutes from Faculty Student Staff Liaison Committee meetings and School/Department/DTE Student Staff Liaison Committee meetings.
- 8.11. To support the ongoing monitoring and review of the student representation system.
- 8.12. To support the coordination of the Postgraduate Network Forums.

### 9. University: Education Services responsibilities:

- 9.1. To designate a specific point of contact for communications with faculties, schools and Bristol SU.
- 9.2. To work with Bristol SU to provide guidance, information and examples of best practice for students and staff (academics and support staff) involved in student representation activity.
- 9.3. To support Bristol SU in the delivery of PGR representative recruitment processes by promoting the role of rep within the academic community.
- 9.4. To support the ongoing monitoring and review of the student representation system.

10. Faculty responsibilities:

- 10.1. To designate a specific point of contact, normally this will be the Faculty Education Manager, for communications with Bristol SU and schools/departments/DTEs who will have responsibility for communications with Bristol SU and meeting the faculty expectations as laid out in this Code.
- 10.2. It is recommended that faculties invite PGR representatives to sit as members of their Faculty Graduate Studies Committee/DTE Committees or equivalent. If representatives are not members of these committees, then faculties should coordinate at least four faculty level SSLCs throughout the academic year, and invite relevant staff to attend as appropriate. However, if representatives are members of these committees, then the representatives can decide whether or not faculty student staff liaison committees are necessary.
- 10.3. To ensure that their PGR Faculty representative (elected online through Bristol SU) is also a member of those committees on which PGR Representatives are members.
- 10.4. To provide their PGR faculty representative with access to mailing lists or suitable alternative communication methods for the PGR representatives in their faculty.
- 10.5. To provide PGR representatives sitting on faculty SSLCs or Graduate Studies Committees or equivalent with mechanisms of liaising with school/department/DTE PGR reps to gather their views and disseminate feedback to/from faculty level meetings.
- 10.6. Faculty Graduate Education Directors should liaise with Bristol SU as necessary to discuss Rep requirements, any training needs and to provide feedback on the representation system.
- 10.7. To make available Faculty SSLC minutes to relevant students, staff and Bristol SU contacts.

11. School/Department/DTE responsibilities:

- 11.1. To designate a specific point of contact for communications with Bristol SU, the school and the respective faculty.
- 11.2. To provide Bristol SU with information about the PGR rep positions, recruitment processes and the meetings to which PGR reps are invited.
- 11.3. To work with Bristol SU to facilitate effective promotion of PGR representative positions and subsequent training.
- 11.4. To provide PGR representatives with timely access to relevant student mailing lists.
- 11.5. It is recommended that schools invite PGR Representatives to sit as members of their School Graduate Studies Committee/DTE Committees or equivalent. If representatives are not members of these committees, then schools should coordinate at least four school level SSLCs throughout the academic year, and invite relevant staff to attend as appropriate.

However, if all representatives are members of these committees, then the representatives can decide whether or not student staff liaison committees are necessary.

- 11.6. To provide PGR reps with relevant contact information (e.g. administrative staff, PGR Programme Directors, Heads of Departments, Heads of School, school management structures) and an outline of the roles to provide clarity on where decisions are made and by whom so the rep has clear guidance on who to contact about different issues.
- 11.7. To assist PGR representatives in gaining access to appropriate spaces if they wish to hold drop-in or consultative sessions.
- 11.8. To promote Bristol SU's Postgraduate Network as a means of gathering feedback and engaging in student democracy.
- 11.9. To make available school SSLC minutes to relevant students and staff, the Faculty SSLC secretary and Bristol SU contact.

#### 12. PGR Faculty Representative Responsibilities:

- 12.1. To attend induction training and undertake any further training to ensure preparation to effectively undertake the role.
- 12.2. To keep abreast of issues affecting students and actively seek out the opinion of peers. This could include attending meetings of Bristol SU's Postgraduate Network Forums, which provide a representative and social function for research students and their representatives.
- 12.3. To liaise with other representatives to initiate potential collaborations and share ideas.
- 12.4. To attend and represent the views and opinions of PGR students at faculty meetings as appropriate.
- 12.5. To feedback and discuss issues raised at faculty SSLCs or Graduate Studies Committees with student peers.
- 12.6. To feedback information from University-level meetings to faculty-level meetings and peers.
- 12.7. To promote the role of PGR faculty representative and help raise student awareness of the support the role can offer.
- 12.8. To feed key information to the Bristol SU Postgraduate Education Officer as and when required.
- 12.9. To attend Bristol SU democratic events, including acting as a voting member of Bristol SU Student Council to help enable educational issues to be represented.
- 12.10. To engage with the Bristol SU Network Chairs on issues related to equality and diversity to help meet the needs of all students.
- 12.11. To attend Education Network meetings to report on and discuss any educational issues arising from the faculty and feed into the work of the Bristol SU Education Officers.

#### 13. PGR Student Representative responsibilities:

- 13.1. To attend induction training and undertake any further training to ensure preparation to effectively undertake the role.

- 13.2. To keep abreast of issues affecting students and actively seek out the opinion of peers. This could include attending meetings of Bristol SU's Postgraduate Network Forums, which provide a representative and social function for research students and their representatives.
- 13.3. To liaise with other representatives to initiate potential collaborations and share ideas.
- 13.4. To attend and represent the views and opinions of PGR students at faculty/school/department/DTE meetings as appropriate.
- 13.5. To feedback and discuss issues raised at faculty or school/department/DTE SSLCs or Graduate Studies Committees with student peers.
- 13.6. To promote the role of PGR representative and help raise student awareness of the support the role can offer.
- 13.7. To feed key information to PGR Faculty Representatives and the Bristol SU Postgraduate Education Officer as and when required.
- 13.8. To act as a voting member of Bristol SU Student Council to help enable educational issues to be represented.
- 13.9. To engage with the Bristol SU Network Chairs on issues related to equality and diversity to help meet the needs of all students

## **Operations & Practice**

### 14. Nominations / Elections

- 14.1. There should be at least one PGR representative per school/department/DTE. It is recommended that representatives are dispersed across the years of study.
- 14.2. Recruitment should be fair, transparent and timely (if possible at the beginning of TB1). Where more than one candidate nominates themselves for the role, an election should be held; support and guidance is available from the Bristol SU Representation Team.
- 14.3. PGR faculty representatives will be elected, these will be held online through Bristol SU.
- 14.4. PGR student representative recruitment will be held locally and not via the online election system however, if schools or faculties you wish to hold online elections please contact the Bristol SU Representation Team.
- 14.5. If there are no candidates in the first instance, nominations should be re-opened. If there are still no candidates, students should be co-opted to the role. The details of those recruited should be provided to Bristol SU as soon as possible after recruitment, so Bristol SU can ensure they are trained and supported throughout the year.

### 15. Training for Student Representatives

- 15.1. Specific training for PGR representatives is available, and faculty or school/department/DTE specific training is available upon request.
- 15.2. All PGR representatives are expected to complete the initial induction training provided by Bristol SU.
- 15.3. Schools will assist in promoting the available training to PGR representatives.

- 15.4. Schools/Departments/DTEs should make arrangements for induction of newly elected PGR representatives into relevant roles and processes.
- 15.5. Bristol SU will provide optional ongoing training and support for all PGR representatives (e.g. covering practical necessities, skills-based training, policy discussion), including faculty specific support for representatives. One-to-one support and advice is available on request.
- 15.6. Bristol SU will provide training and support for any student chairs of SSLCs / FSSLCs.

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Approved by Student Experience Committee November 2015 (formerly known as Current Arrangements for Student Representation (Research Programmes))

Minor amendments approved by Student Partnership & Representation Group June 2016

Minor factual and nomenclature amendments approved by Academic Quality Manager, AQPO, September 2020