

St Andrews Students' Association
Postgraduate Representation Internship
Final Report (February 2021)

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Executive Summary

The recommendations in this report aim to create a more effective postgraduate (PG) representation system that encourages stronger and more meaningful participation from the students it is designed to serve.

Structure

The structure of the PG representation system should be substantially revised. PG and undergraduate (UG) reporting lines should be separated by introducing PGT and PGR Presidents as line managers of PG Reps. Additionally, PG Officers representing several key interest groups should be introduced. These changes would strengthen and distinguish the PG voice by providing mechanisms for PG Reps to raise issues and concerns beyond the school level. The role of PG Academic Convenor should be converted into a part-time paid position. Formal meetings within the revised PG representation system include: PGT and PGR Forums, providing PG Reps with the opportunity to raise issues at a University-wide level; PG Academic Forums (equivalent to PG Executive Forums) which allow PG issues to be elevated to the University-wide level; separate Student-Staff Consultative Committees (SSCCs) for PGR students. Meeting names and terminology should be consistent across schools and resources explaining the new structure (including visual aids) should be made available to all students.

Elections

All PGT and PGR elections should be held during one unified PG Election in October. This will offer clarity and lead to better PG election promotion strategies. PG Elections should be hosted through a single election portal, managed by the Students' Association, to ensure all representatives are elected democratically and fairly. The Students' Association should track election statistics and post results. Eliminating the barriers to participating in elections (not knowing about them; similarity of candidates; uncontested races, etc.) should be prioritised.

Role Responsibility and Training

The PG Rep handbook should be revised and role descriptions updated. PG Reps should no longer be formally expected to plan events. PG Reps should be required to complete a set handover procedure overseen by the Students' Association. New support resources, such as a dedicated Microsoft Teams area should be created to support the restructured two-part training, which should focus on preparing PG Reps to effectively execute their duties. The achievements and successes of PG Reps should be recognised through a centralised "You Asked, We Did" page. Improving the ability of PG Reps to communicate with their cohorts would make outcomes of feedback clearer to students and deconstruct misconceptions that the PG representation system is ineffective.

Recruitment and Incentives

The PG Academic Convenor role should be converted into a part-time, paid student position. As the manager of the PG representation system with significant responsibilities, the PG Academic Convenor needs to be compensated for the dedication and number of hours the role requires. Reps should gain HEAR accreditation for fulfilling their duties, which would bring St Andrews in

line with other UK universities. Training and skills development opportunities for PG Reps should be expanded. Data on Rep satisfaction needs to be tracked to evaluate the success of improvements to the representation system.

Theme 5: Removing Barriers

The introduction of PG Officers will give a voice to specific PG groups (Part-time, Distance Learning, International, Graduate Teaching) who are often underrepresented or face specific issues. Creating designated advocates will give the PG Academic Convenor a stronger ability to impact the issues affecting these sub-populations of the PG community. A diversity and inclusion statement should be inserted into recruitment materials to correct for some students not feeling representative of their peers. Provision should be made for PG Reps to carry out duties remotely and expected hours should be clearly communicated to prospective PG Reps to combat misconceptions about time commitments.

Project Summary

To complete this project and to draft these recommendations, the PG representation interns prioritised five main tasks: (1) drafting theme areas to guide the project; (2) conducting focus groups with key stakeholders; (3) soliciting a survey of the PG student population; (4) researching other universities and their representation systems; (5) outreach to other universities.

In the early stages of the project, the interns reviewed existing documents and structure, including: a questionnaire sent to all PG representatives and other stakeholders at the end of the previous year; the changes recommended by the PG Academic Convenor; website and training materials for representatives; the chain of supervision for representatives; and attending specific committee meetings to gather a sense of the current representative landscape.

From these materials, the interns created five core themes (Structure; Elections; Role Responsibility and Training; Recruitment and Incentives; and Removing Barriers) with relevant specifics included. These core themes were reviewed by the Students' Association Director of Education (DoEd) and the PG Academic Convenor.

To strengthen the understanding of the themes and to gather additional perspectives, the interns hosted two focus groups, one with PG representatives and one with School Presidents. These two meetings took place in the early part of Semester 1, 2020/21.

The interns conducted a University-wide survey of PG students. There were 475 responses to the survey (~20% of the total PG population) which provided key data on barriers, elections, knowledge of the representation system, and other areas.

10 other universities with noteworthy PG representation systems in Scotland, the UK, and in the USA have been identified through the interns' research. These institutions include: University of Glasgow; University of Sheffield; University of West London; Cambridge University; Imperial College London; University of Edinburgh; University of York; University of Colorado, Boulder; University of the Highlands and Islands; and Aberystwyth University. The interns have examined electronic materials related to PG representation on these universities' websites.

The interns met with several of these universities to discuss their representation models in more detail. These include: Imperial College London, University of Edinburgh, University of York, University of Glasgow, and University of Sheffield.

After significant analysis and discussion of all of these data sources, the interns put forward the recommendations made in this report.

Recommendations for Theme 1: Structure

1.1: Structure: Restructure the PG representation system around the following roles: Director of Education (DoEd); PG Academic Convenor; PGT and PGR Presidents; PG Officers; and PG Representatives (PG Reps).

Additional Details and Context

- Additional details, including a flow chart and description of the responsibilities of each position, are available in **Appendix A**. A brief summary of the changes to each position are described below.
- PG Academic Convenor:
 - This role should be strengthened and expanded into a paid part-time position (see **4.1: Pay**.)
 - Report to the DoEd and oversee the running of the PG representation system, in particular the PGT and PGR Presidents and PG Officers.
- PGT and PGR Presidents:
 - (New positions) One representative for PGT students and one for PGR students to be elected during the autumn elections.
 - Report to the PG Academic Convenor and act as first point of contact for PG Representatives to raise issues at the University-wide level.
- PG Officers:
 - (New positions) These positions would ensure groups which face specific issues within the PG community have adequate representation.
 - Report to the PG Academic Convenor and work alongside other representatives in the PG academic representation system
 - See **5.1: Postgraduate Officers** for more information.
- PG Representatives:
 - This role should continue to exist in its current form but with greater guidance on the expectations and responsibilities of the position.
 - They should report to PGT and PGR Presidents rather than School Presidents.
- Election timelines for these positions are noted in **2.1: Election Format and Timing**.
- As a part of this restructuring, remove the formal reporting element of the relationship between School Presidents and PG Reps. Instead, the link between School Presidents and PG Reps should be supportive and informative. PG Reps should bring issues affecting the entire School to School Presidents, and School Presidents should bring issues affecting PG students to their School's PG Reps. Both groups should collaborate whenever necessary and effective.
- The Executive Representative role should be removed as the Executive Forum has been revised and restructured (see **1.3: Meeting Structure**.)
- The Students' Association should evaluate the need for additional support staff in the area of student representation, given these changes and the number of support staff at other universities (see supporting evidence below).

Supporting Evidence

- The “Supporting Evidence” sections from several other recommendations also apply to this core structural shift. See **Recommendations 1.2, 1.3, 1.5, 2.1, 4.1, 5.1, and 5.4** for more supporting data.
- Several of the other universities we have researched have mid-level PG representatives (e.g. faculty representatives) in place as a core element of their structure (Imperial College London, University of York, University of Glasgow, University of Sheffield).
- The importance and value of mid-level representatives was emphasised across several conversations with other universities (Imperial College London, University of York, and the University of Glasgow).
 - Imperial College London, for example, expressed that the role of faculty representatives allowed their union leadership to quickly contact several PG representatives and disseminate information in a timely manner.
 - The University of York, for instance, emphasised the importance of the role for reducing the workload on the academic sabbatical officer. They also noted that the governance structure within the University is becoming more focused on faculties, which strengthens the need for these roles.
- Initially the PG Interns considered having two PG Faculty Representatives, however, it was determined that the PGT/PGR distinction was more relevant to PG representation than the distinction between the faculties.
- In the School Presidents focus group, participants felt that the relationship between School Presidents and PG Reps was not very effective. For instance, in some cases School Presidents are told that they should not speak for PG students by their departments, which means even if they feel well-versed in PG issues, they are not able to advocate for them effectively. Often, School Presidents expressed that they did not feel knowledgeable enough to speak on behalf of PG students.
- In the PG Reps focus group, participants also described a rather disconnected relationship with their School Presidents. Excluding one PGT Rep, participants had little to no interaction with their School President and were not being supervised by them.
- Survey data also suggests that 42% of PG students do not feel comfortable reporting issues to their School President (compared to 22% who said that they did not feel comfortable reporting issues to their representative). Similarly, PG students were less familiar with the role of School Presidents than their PG representatives. 45% of PG students do not know who their School President is.
- Only *one* of the researched universities (University of Glasgow) had a structure where UG representatives supervise PG Reps, however, in practice PG Reps report to an alternative representative role held by PG students. The supervisory structure at St Andrews is largely disconnected from best-practice at other universities.
- From meetings with other universities, it was clear that PG students feel better represented when they are treated separately from UG students, even when content provided to both groups is effectively the same. (University of Edinburgh, University of Sheffield).
- Survey data indicates that 59% of PG students do not know what the role of PG Executive Representatives entails.

- The PG Academic Convenor recommended removing the Executive Representative role at the beginning of the academic year in her report to the Academic Monitoring Group.
- No other universities appear to have a role similar to the PG Executive Representative.
- Several of the other universities we have contacted have *at least* one full-time staff member dedicated to student representation within their Students' Associations. (e.g. University of Edinburgh [3 full time]; University of York [1 full time]; Imperial College London [3 full time]). In contrast there are no full time (or even part-time) staff assigned specifically to student representation in St Andrews.

Resources and Timeline

- Staff time will be required to create new position descriptions and to modify those associated with changed positions (also see **1.5: Explanatory Resources**).
- Staff time to train Students' Association staff, current representatives, School Presidents, University staff members, PG students, and other constituencies regarding structural changes will be required.
- New fiscal resources will be required to support the expansion of the PG Academic Convenor's role (See **4.1: Pay** for more details).
- Additional resources to support additional union staff members in the area of student representation should be researched and considered.
- Timeline: Decide on revised supervisory and PG representation structure (spring, 2021); revise policy (summer 2021); begin autumn semester with new reporting structure in place (autumn 2021).

1.2: Student-Staff Meetings: Hold separate PGR Student-Staff Consultative Committee meetings (SSCCs).

Additional Details and Context

- As some PGRs (including PG Reps) teach UG and PGT students, it is important that there is a separate space to talk about teaching issues and to prevent confusion regarding power dynamics and conflict of interest in these meetings.
- Taught and research students face different issues, so there is limited benefit to a shared meeting. However, PGR Reps could be invited to other SSCCs as judged appropriate by individual Schools, provided they are still given their own SSCC in which to raise and discuss issues.

Supporting Evidence

- This change was recommended by the PG Academic Convenor at the beginning of the academic year 2020/21 in her report to the Academic Monitoring Group.
- During the PG Rep focus group, a participant noted how the issues UG and PGT students raised in SSCCs were completely separate to those faced by PGR students. The PG Reps thought that it made little sense for taught and research students to share a single meeting with staff.
- It is a concern that PGRs, who sometimes also act as teaching staff, may be in the same room with students who they teach or otherwise interact with as staff.

- Other universities hold separate student-staff meetings for PGR students, citing the very different experiences the two groups have alongside the potential issues surrounding the dual status of some PGRs as both student and teaching staff.

Resources and Timeline

- Academic staff time, as well as either physical space bookings or MS Teams will be required to account for the expanded number of SSCC meetings.
- PGR SSCCs can be separated immediately, beginning in the spring of 2021. Policy should be revised over the summer of 2021.

1.3: Meeting Structure: The PG Executive Forum should be renamed to 'Postgraduate Academic Forum,' and new PGT and PGR Forums should be introduced.

Additional Details and Context

- In order for PG Reps to elevate issues affecting students beyond the school level, PGT and PGR Forums should be established, and the university-wide level meeting (previously PG Executive Forum) should be revised and renamed to PG Academic Forum.
- PG Academic Forum:
 - University-wide discussion of PG issues and challenges; body to recommend University-wide changes; handles issues elevated from SSCCs and PGT/PGR Forums.
 - Attended by: DoEd; PG Academic Convenor; PGT/PGR Presidents; PG Officers; Proctor; Provost; Pro-Dean PGT; Pro-Dean PGR.
 - Extend the duration of these meetings to two hours each to ensure adequate time for discussion of issues. Maintain a schedule of twice per semester.
- PGT and PGR Forums:
 - PGT or PGR-wide discussion of issues and challenges elevated from SSCCs and individual PG Reps; discussion of successes and challenges for PG Reps; prepare issues to raise to the PG Academic Forum.
 - Attended by: PGT or PGR President; PG Officers; PGT or PGR Reps as relevant; Proctor; Associate Dean PGT or PGR as relevant.
 - Recommended duration of 2 hours with 3 meetings per semester.
- Staff members and PG Reps need to take special care to report back on the changes made as a result of these meetings to the constituencies that raised the issues (such as through a "You Asked, We Did" webpage, and via direct outreach).
- Introductions and greeting remarks should be kept to a minimum at these meetings, in order to cover all issues in a timely manner. Other social outlets for PG Reps to meet each other and the administrative team should be organised instead.
- Additional details about the revisions to these meetings are available in **Appendix A**.
- Information about the purpose and running of the meetings should be included in resources given to PG Reps. For example, a handout explaining the purpose, function, and operations of the PG Academic Forums could be provided to new Reps.

Supporting Evidence:

- The PG Rep focus group suggested that PG Executive Forums were particularly useful but too short to discuss all of the issues PG Reps would like to raise, in part because of the large number of people attending the meetings.
- According to the focus groups, there is a general lack of knowledge and understanding about Executive Forums amongst PG Reps and the wider PG community.
- In the PG Rep focus group several participants noted that it was extremely difficult to turn their successes at the School level into University-wide change for PG students facing the same issue.
- Survey results indicate that students feel less effectively represented the further away from their programme the representative is; students feel most effectively represented by staff members and PG Reps, and least effectively represented by the Students' Association Officers.
- Several universities have clearly outlined how representatives should escalate issues to the proper bodies when a problem falls outside their scope of a class/course representative (University of Edinburgh, University of Sheffield, University of Glasgow.)
- A consistent theme from conversations with other universities is that PG students feel less connected to and less represented by their students' union than UG students (University of Edinburgh, Imperial College London, University of Glasgow, University of Sheffield.)

Resources and Timeline

- Additional staff time (for administrators who attend the PG Academic Forums) will be required.
- Some additional staff time (for the Proctor, the Dean of Science, and the Dean of Arts & Divinity) will be required.
- Staff time to amend policies will be required.
- Additional bookings of physical space (or electronic resources such as MS Teams) will be required to host these new and extended meetings.
- Revise policy during the spring and summer of 2021; begin the 2021/22 academic year with the new meeting structure in place.

1.4: Standardisation of Terminology: Committee names (such as SSCCs, School Forums, etc.) should be standardised across the University regardless of school.

Additional Details and Context

- Standardisation of terminology across Schools and departments allows for more accessibility and clarity in training and resources and allows PG Reps from different backgrounds to communicate more effectively.
- The University should create a “glossary of terms” in its policy that explains all relevant terminology related to PG student representation. This information should be included in PG Rep training and in resources (see **3.4 Handbook and Resources** and **3.5 Training**).

Supporting Evidence

- The names and standard procedures for committees and meetings at other universities are set by a standard university policy (e.g. University of Edinburgh, University of York, Imperial College London, University of Glasgow, University of Sheffield.)
- The PG Rep and School President focus groups indicated that operations within Schools tend to be idiosyncratic, for example who attends which committees and the roles available to students vary widely.

Resources and Timeline

- Staff time to amend policy will be required.
- Staff time to communicate and enforce this change across schools and departments will be required.
- Policy should be revised over the summer of 2021, to be implemented and communicated in the 2021/22 academic year.
- Recommended implementor: Academic Policy Officer

1.5: Explanatory Resources: Update and strengthen explanatory resources of the PG representation structure including: a revised flowchart; updated role descriptions; and an outline of the relevant meetings.

Additional Details and Context:

- Post all materials to revised Students' Association webpages, including a clear section heading for PG students.
- Update the Role Descriptions for each post, and conduct a yearly review to revise and clarify duties (to be carried out by the PG Academic Convenor.)
- Other explanatory resources, such as videos and student orientation training, should be further researched and developed.
- Revisions to the representation structure should be supported by visual and written aids so that returning PG Reps understand the new structure.

Supporting Evidence

- Survey data indicates that 47% of PG students only "Somewhat" understand the PG representation system, and an additional 20% do not understand the system at all.
- Role Descriptions on the St Andrews Students' Association page have not been updated since 2014/15.
- The Graduate Students' Union at the University of York are invited to departmental induction ceremonies to provide an overview of who they are, what they do, and how PG students can get involved.
- Other universities observed a lack of PG familiarity with resources available to them is a consistent barrier to engaging PG students in academic representation (Imperial College London, University of Edinburgh, University of Glasgow.)
- The PG Rep focus group stated that there were not enough resources or training in understanding the structure of the academic representation system.

Resources and Timeline

- Staff time to update resources, including the DoEd and Students' Association design staff.
- Support of the IT department to make resources available online.

- Revise and update materials in spring/summer 2021; publish materials by the start of autumn semester 2021.

1.6: Policy: Update policy based on structural changes recommended in this report; conduct additional research into other areas for policy revisions.

Additional Details and Context

- Update policy to: remove School Presidents' supervision of PG Reps; add PGT/PGR Presidents; add PG Officers; revise the roles of the PG Academic Convenor and PG Reps; update meeting structures; update election timelines; standardise terminology; election eligibility; pay; and providing PG Reps access to their cohort's mailing list.
- Continue research into the policy revisions in the following areas: replacing vacant representative seats; conflict of interest guidance; and the student/PG Rep ratio.
- Communicate policy changes to staff members across the University, so that they are informed and up to date on the new representative structure for PG students.
- Any future changes made to the representation system should also be reflected in policy.

Supporting Evidence

- Current PG Reps communicated that there should be policy regarding how to handle conflicts of interest that arise owing to their position as both representative and student (and sometimes also as teaching staff.)
- There is currently no policy on how to replace representatives who step down from their position– excluding for the PG Academic Convenor role, which is governed by the Association Bylaws.
- Some universities suggested that having too many students to represent is rarely a problem, whereas having too few students to speak for is more common (University of Edinburgh.)
- The University of Sheffield requires that each course/cohort has a minimum of two representatives in each year group, but does not set a limit on the maximum number of representatives per student.

Resources and Timeline

- University staff time will be required to update policy documents and communicate these changes to staff.
- Additional financial resources may be required to fund additional research into policy recommendations; this may instead fall to the responsibility of University staff.
- Policy updates should take place over the course of spring/summer 2021, to be communicated to staff before the start of the 2021/22 academic year.

Recommendations for Theme 2: Elections

2.1: Election Format and Timing: Host one unified, comprehensive Postgraduate Election in the month of October each year.

Additional Details and Context

- The following positions would be elected by the PG student body during these elections:
 - PGT President; PGR President; all PG Officers; all PGT Reps; all PGR Reps.
 - This ensures that both PGT and PGR students are eligible for the PGT/PGR President and PG Officer roles.
- The PG Academic Convenor should be elected during the March elections.
- School Presidents should not be responsible for managing and coordinating PG elections. This duty should instead fall to the PG Academic Convenor (see **1.1 Structure and Appendix A.**)
- To avoid PGT students experiencing any gap in representation, it should be expected that terms for all PG Reps run from the beginning of October for a full year. In the case that some PGT representatives have graduated before the conclusion of their term, PGT/PGR Presidents and the PG Academic Convenor should step in to fill the gaps in representation for such programmes.
- PG elections need to be unified on one consistent platform and portal, run through the Students' Association rather than varying by School.

Supporting Evidence

- Combining PG elections to all take place in October has the following benefits: less work for the PGT and PGR Presidents, and the PG Academic Convenor, who would run the PG Election; PGT students have more time to get to know their programme and peers before voting in elections; emphasises the distinction between PG and UG students; PGT students do not have to be rallied to vote twice (once for PGT-specific representatives, and once for PG Officers); easier to promote one cohesive set of PG elections. These benefits outweigh the acknowledged costs of keeping PGT elections in September.
- Survey results about PG elections timeline did not achieve a majority, and there was only a 6% difference in opinion between the two major options: 31% of respondents preferred to have one combined PG election in October, and 25% preferred one PGT election in September AND one PGR election in October.
- Even among PGT students, survey results indicate that one PG Election in October is the most popular option (25%). (23% preferred PGT elections in September and PGR elections in October).
- In the PG Rep focus group, the opinions on election timelines varied substantially. All participants agreed that hosting PGR elections in October was an improvement. There was less consensus, however, with regards to when to schedule PGT elections. A PGT Rep suggested that moving them to October might actually reduce engagement, given that PGT students will be well into their coursework by that time.
- In the School President focus group, there was a clear consensus that School Presidents felt frustrated at running separate elections for PGR students and unanimously requested not to be involved in both parts of future split elections.
- The universities that hold one university-wide election for PG students do not tend to separate PGT from PGR elections. (University of York, University of Edinburgh, University of Cambridge, University of West London)

- Some universities do not host university-wide elections. Instead, they rely on individual departments and schools to run these (Imperial College London, University of Glasgow). However, some of these institutions have advised against this model, as it actually restricts democratic principles. According to some universities, relying on departments to run their own elections inevitably results in some not hosting any at all. This prevents some students from choosing their representatives or running themselves had they wanted to. These universities recommend instituting centralised elections if infrastructure allows for that.
- The DoEd has received some feedback asking not to move PGT elections to October during the 2020/21 academic year elections.
- According to a report made by the PG Academic Convener, approximately 20% of PG Reps are not elected through centralised elections at the University of St Andrews. This report resulted in the initial recommendation to switch the timeline of PGR elections to October this past autumn (2020).

Resources and Timeline

- No financial resources are needed to convert election timelines, however, funding may be required to standardise the election platform across all schools. Additionally, financial resources will be required for the PG Academic Convener's position, as expanded upon in **4.1: Pay**.
- Some staff time will be required to standardise election platforms across Schools.
- Additional staff support and time will be required during the transition year in order to communicate the change and layout to staff and students.
- Staff time for the DoEd and IT Services will be required to update the elections portal.
- Policy and procedure amendments should be revised over the spring/summer of 2021; new format changes should be communicated to departments/staff over the summer of 2021; communication to PG students about their elections should be introduced in early autumn 2021; the new election cycle should be implemented in the 2021/22 academic year.

2.2: Election Eligibility: Establish eligibility guidelines for PG Reps that are clear and allow for a wide range of participants to pursue the role.

Additional Details and Context

- Eligibility criteria for PG students should be wide-reaching and accessible. The standard minimum qualifications should be: (1) currently enrolled PG student; (2) in good disciplinary standing with the Students' Association; and (3) will be enrolled until the end of the current academic year. (For PG Reps, PGT/PGR Presidents, and PG Officers it is also worth adding the requirement that the student be a member of that student body.)
- In line with **5.2: Diversity and Inclusion**, include a diversity and inclusion statement in all formalised documents.

Supporting Evidence

- Currently, no eligibility criteria are stated for PG representatives– either in [policy](#) or in the [role description](#).

- Across other universities, eligibility information is readily available in both policy and in the role description(s) (e.g. University of Cambridge, Imperial College London, University of Edinburgh.)
- Approximately 3% of PG students believe they are not eligible to run for representative roles.

Resources and Timeline

- Policy can be revised to incorporate new eligibility criteria during the spring of 2021, so that it can be posted for the 2021/22 academic year.

2.3: Communication of Election Results: Post election results and statistics on which roles have been filled on the Students' Association website.

Additional Details and Context

- The number of PG roles which go unfilled should be tracked year on year as one measurement of PG engagement. This would also be a helpful point of comparison with other universities who post this data publicly.
- Collecting data on which schools/departments/courses historically have open positions could also provide key insights for future restructuring and prioritisation of recruitment resources.

Supporting Evidence

- Some institutions post their PG election results and/or positions filled publicly on their websites (University of Colorado Boulder, Imperial College London.)
- Other universities provide students with the ability to search for, or otherwise see, their representatives.
- A lack of trend/comparison data makes it difficult to determine how successful recruitment efforts are/have been, but it should be noted that St Andrews has managed to fill an unusually high number of PG Rep positions compared to other universities, largely down to the efforts of the 20/21 PG Academic Convenor.

Resources and Timeline

- Staff time to analyse the data and modify the Students' Association website.
- Election results for 2020/2021 should be posted immediately. In future years, election results can be collected and disseminated within one week of the election.
- Recommended implementers: DoEd, Union Education Advocate, and IT services.

2.4: Election Promotion and Engagement: Prioritise addressing the top five reasons students do not vote in their PG Rep elections.

Additional Details and Context

- The major reasons PG students cite for not voting in elections include: not (1) knowing about them; (2) uncontested elections; (3) inability to distinguish candidates or their views; (4) lack of understanding of the roles; (5) lack of time to vote.

- **(1) Knowing about them**– Employ a comprehensive communication strategy promoting the PG elections. Communication strategies should include the following basic channels: the Students’ Association website; newsletters; social media; physical/printed materials; and direct communications through departments. Consider adding election dates and overview of the representation system to orientation for PG students.
- **(2) Uncontested elections**- Clear communication from the Students’ Association about the positions available and how to run for election. Include a diversity and inclusion statement in recruitment materials (see **5.2: Diversity and Inclusion**). Improved recruitment strategies should also increase competition (See **4.4– Standardise Recruiting Methods**).
- **(3) Inability to distinguish candidates or their views**- Consider reviewing manifesto guidelines and questions to encourage differentiation of vision from PG candidates. More research may be required to make improvements to distinguishing candidates.
- **(4) Lack of understanding of the roles**– Sharing examples of successful PG Reps and the changes that have been made as a result of the representation system as a part of election promotion could help to combat apathy toward the positions. Data suggests that there is a correlation between the visibility of PG Reps and election turnout. As such PG Reps should make an effort to make themselves visible and known to their cohort prior to elections taking place.
- **(5) Lack of time to vote**- Moving the PG election timeline to October may free up more time for PG students to vote in elections. Advertise the short time it takes to vote in PG elections as a part of election promotion (e.g. “Spend five minutes and choose your representatives!”).
- More research could be carried out into each of these areas in future years.

Supporting Evidence

- Survey data suggests that 30% of respondents who did not vote did not know about the election; 27% cited “other” reasons for not voting (top reasons are 2-5 above); and 17% a lack of time to vote. Approximately 16% of respondents did not want to vote.
- Survey data indicates that 43% of respondents felt neutral about the way elections were promoted this last year, and 15% felt negatively.
- Survey data informs us that students who could identify their representatives are 39% more likely to vote than those who could not, suggesting a correlation between PG Rep visibility and election turnout.
- Data from other universities suggests that PG engagement with elections is typically low, for example, Imperial College London’s PG elections saw 7.5% turnout this year.
- Some universities (University of Edinburgh, University of Glasgow) did not have specific statistics available, but anecdotally shared that PG engagement in representative elections is typically lower than UG engagement.
- Common election promotion techniques from other universities include: website; newsletters; social media; physical/printed materials; and direct communications through departments. (Imperial College London, University of Edinburgh, University of York, University of Sheffield, University of Glasgow.)

Resources and Timeline

- Improvements to election promotion should be prioritised over spring/summer 2021. A formal election strategy should be put in place by the October 2021 PG elections.
- Staff time will be required to analyse and implement strategies suggested. Input and involvement from current representatives during the elections will also be required. New marketing materials (such as graphics, sponsored social media posts, and printed materials) may be required. Paid research hours to conduct further analysis on election promotion may be worthwhile.
- Following the PG election cycle in October 2021, the impact of any strategies employed to address these issues should be evaluated.

Recommendations for Theme 3: Role Responsibility and Training

3.1: Empowerment of Representatives: Emphasise and distinguish the impact representatives can have in the resources and materials provided to PG Reps; create a “You Asked, We Did…” section on the Students’ Association website.

Additional Details and Context

- Details on the impact representatives can have should be included in: the handbook, the position descriptions, guidance and policy, in training sessions, and should be communicated to staff.
- One area that seems under-emphasised in the representation system at St Andrews is closing the feedback loop with constituents. Setting the expectation to report back to peers incentivises representatives to be stronger advocates for changes.

Supporting Evidence

- Many universities cite the importance of representatives and the need to close the feedback loop in their training materials (e.g. University of York, Imperial College London, University of Sheffield.)
- The University of Edinburgh, for instance, describes the difference between gathering opinions and student representation in its training materials: “[*Because*] students may sometimes have contradictory views on issues, be unclear how they would like issues to be addressed, or highlight a large number of issues making it difficult for staff to know what to prioritise. It is your role to take direct student feedback, and combine it with your own knowledge and experiences in order to: (1) Take an informed position on issues; (2); Communicate student feedback constructively (3) Identify potential solutions which will benefit students.”
- In the free response section of the survey, the second most common request was for more details about the impact that PG Reps have.
- 19% of survey respondents feel that they are ineffectively represented by their current PG Rep.
- Students who do not feel effectively represented also report the widest range of contact from their PG Reps; 37% said that they are “never” contacted by their representative.
- Students who felt effectively represented were 10% more likely to run or consider running for the position of PG Rep than those who felt ineffectively represented.

- Students who felt effectively represented were 25% more likely to have voted in the last election.

Resources and Timeline

- Distinguishing impact: Staff time; handbook and physical resources; examples of successful representatives.
- Distinguishing impact: Update physical materials (handbook, training resources, webpages, guidance/policy) over the spring/summer 2021. Begin 2021/22 academic year with revised materials.
- Website: Staff time for website development and continuity; continued staff time to regularly update web pages after hosting SSCCs (updated *at least* once per semester); input from representatives and relevant staff (e.g. DoPGRs/DoPGTs.)
- Website: Design a comprehensive/standard format over the course of spring/summer 2021. Begin implementation of “You Asked, We Did” page starting in autumn, 2021.
- Recommended implementor: DoEd, Union Education Advocate, and IT support.

3.2: Event Organisation: Remove event planning responsibilities from the role description for PG Reps.

Additional Details and Context

- Event planning duties should be fulfilled through alternative means, such as strengthening the Postgraduate Society and subject-specific societies.
- If PG Reps are expected or asked to host events by their departments, consider compensation for taking on duties beyond their remit.

Supporting Evidence

- In the survey conducted during the 2019/20 academic year, the PG Academic Convenor found that $\frac{1}{3}$ of representatives thought event planning should be a part of their responsibilities; $\frac{1}{3}$ believed it should not; and $\frac{1}{3}$ did not know.
- None of the other universities researched expect their PG Reps to organise/facilitate/plan events as part of the basic duties of the role.
 - These responsibilities are largely taken on by department and university-wide societies at other universities.
- During training of PG Reps, it should be made clear that event planning is *not* part of their formal remit but is not discouraged should they decide to take on such responsibilities on their own.
- This change was recommended by the PG Academic Convenor at the beginning of the academic year in her report to the Academic Monitoring Group.

Resources and Timeline

- No additional resources will be required to remove event planning from the expected duties for PG Reps.
- Departments and/or the Students’ Association might consider allocating pool(s) of funding to compensate representatives who do take on event planning duties.
- Some staff time will be required to communicate this change to departments.
- Recommended implementor: DoEd and PG Academic Convenor.

- Timeline: Revise position description in the spring of 2021; communicate this formal transition to departments during summer 2021; implement revised training model in autumn 2021.

3.3: Handovers: Implement a formal handover process for all representatives, managed by the Students' Association.

Additional Details and Context

- Representatives should be required to complete a formal Handover Form at the conclusion of their term. This document would be passed down to successors and would be available for all other representatives to review. Formal meetings to hand over positions would be encouraged, but would not be required or expected.
- Several suggestions for questions to include in the form are: (1) What were some of the challenges you faced this year?; (2) What were some of your successes?; (3) What does your successor need to know to be successful?; (4) Are there any ongoing issues or initiatives?; (5) Who in your School/department should your successor meet?; (6) What were some of the issues students raised to you that did not get resolved?; (7) What did you find was the most effective way to communicate with the students you represent?; (8) What goals did you set out to achieve this year and were they accomplished?; (9) If you had another year in the role, what would you prioritise?; (10) How are the outcomes of SSCCs communicated to other students?; (11) Were there any barriers you faced in carrying out your role responsibilities?
- All representatives should be given access to ALL of the Handover Forms so that they can compare experiences between Schools and discern priorities and challenges from those documents.
- The Handover Form should include the Fulfillment and Satisfaction Survey as described in **4.2: Representative Fulfillment and Satisfaction**. Combining them reduces diminished responses and survey fatigue.
- Rather than leaving it to the representatives themselves or departments, the handover process should be managed centrally by the Students' Association.
- Completing a handover should be communicated to representatives as one of the core functions of their roles in all training and resources.
- Successful handovers should be expected from representatives and incentives (e.g. recognition on transcript) should be conditional upon it being completed.
- The PGT/PGR Presidents and ultimately the PG Academic Convenor would be responsible for ensuring that representatives fill out their Handover Forms. The PG Academic Convenor should be responsible for tracking which representatives have and have not completed their yearly handover.

Supporting Evidence

- During the PG Rep focus group there was a strong consensus that the handover process should be strengthened to provide more School-specific training.
- Research from other universities shows that this is best-practice to ensure that new representatives are brought up-to-speed in their specific department, and require their representatives to conduct handovers. (University of Edinburgh and Imperial College

London conduct handover at all levels, whilst University of Sheffield conducts handover for elected positions.)

- In discussions with other universities, some have indicated that tracking handovers through the Students' Association would be more effective than alternative structures (Imperial College London, University of Edinburgh.)
- Many of the questions in the handover document come from the University of Edinburgh's handover model, in which reports are also made available to all representatives.
- PGT students are usually only present for one year, and often lack background knowledge of their programme/School.
- Sensitive issues (e.g. personal information, counseling, etc.) should not be a representative's duty to handle, so making the Handover Forms available to all representatives should not be a concern.

Resources and Timeline

- Software such as Qualtrics or MS Forms will be required to build the Handover Form (and Fulfillment/Satisfaction Survey). Staff time to design the form will also be required.
- Support from IT Services may be required in order to effectively distribute Handover Forms to all elected representatives.
- Handover Forms should be designed during the spring 2021 in order to capture responses from existing, outgoing representatives before the conclusion of their terms; the new Handover process should be incorporated into training and expectations during the 2021/22 academic year.

Recommendation 3.4: Handbook & Resources: Update and revise the handbook for PG representatives; create a formalised Microsoft Teams area to support PG Representatives.

Additional Details and Context

- The revised handbook should provide guidance on: all committees and boards that representatives attend; how to fulfill duties (e.g. how meetings are run); how to gather and use opinions from students; how to raise issues; an overview of the representative system; key dates and contacts; what is expected of representatives, including a timeline; a decision tree (for example see p. 7 of [ICL's handbook](#)); relevant university policy; and course evaluation.
- The handbook should be updated annually and published online (only), to ensure accuracy and relevance of information.
- In addition to a handbook, the Students Association should create and manage a Teams Area for all representatives, including a separate area for PG Representatives. The purpose of this area is for representatives to be able to contact one another and support staff quickly with questions, ideas, or problems, so that someone can respond within a few minutes.
 - It is important that the Teams area be formalised as a part of the representative role. Instructions on how to use the Teams area should be incorporated into all representative training.

- Representatives should be expected to check the Teams area regularly to see if any important information is available; representatives should also be encouraged to utilise the Teams area to ask questions and communicate with one another.

Supporting Evidence

- During the PG Rep focus group, several participants suggested that some of the information given at the training session could instead be given via written documents to be read independently, which would also give them continuing access to these resources.
- Another suggestion from the focus group was to provide clearer written context on the different committees (such as SSCCs and Academic Forums).
- Survey data suggests that “Additional Training” was one of the top three most effective incentives that would encourage participation in the representation system.
- The most common entry in the free response area of the survey was the request for more information about the role of being a representative.
- The following universities have up-to-date handbooks posted on their websites: Imperial College London, University of Glasgow, University of Sheffield.
- The University of Edinburgh has engineered a very successful MS Teams area, which has seen engagement from 90% of the University’s representatives. This tool, new this year, was implemented to replace traditional handbook materials entirely.

Resources and Timeline

- Staff time will need to be allocated to update the handbook. Staff time will be required yearly in order to update the handbook.
- Access to MS Teams; perhaps staff training in administering and managing Teams pages. Staff time to train representatives to use the Teams area. Staff time to moderate the Teams area.
- The handbook should be updated during the summer of 2021 to ensure that it is prepared for the upcoming academic year (and during the summertime in future years as well).

3.5: Training: Provide two-part training: Part One to be completed independently by representatives, Part Two to be completed synchronously in a group setting. It should be tailored to prepare representatives on the specific functions of their roles.

Additional Details and Context

- Make Part One available electronically for representatives to complete on their own time with a deadline. Host Part Two live (online, in person, or both) for representatives in like-groups to complete together with the leadership team.
- Information for **Part One** of training should include: basic information; role responsibilities; familiarity with resources available; the PG representation structure and meeting descriptions; elevating issues; how to prepare for and chair meetings; timelines and important dates; gathering useful feedback, and communicating with their cohort.
- Information for **Part Two** of training should include: expectations; creating supportive networks (e.g. MS Teams); elevating issues; support and advice; how to utilise available

resources; important dates and next steps; important people to know; current challenges/opportunities within PG representation; and an opportunity to ask questions and interact with other representatives in the PG representation system.

- PG Reps should continue to receive separate training from UG representatives and the current split between PGT and PGR training should also be maintained.
- Student Presidents should be given training/resources about their role in supporting the PG representation system (which should no longer be supervisory) to keep them better informed of PG issues and experiences.
- Resources should be made available to staff on their role within the PG representation system. Options for offering training to staff regarding student representation may be an area for further research.
- Even when capacities arise for training to be in-person, continue to have an online option (or possibly even continue to run training exclusively online) to increase participation (also mentioned in **5.4: Online Participation**.)
- Returning PG Reps need only attend Part Two of the training after their first years.
- Additional training for the PGT/PGR Presidents and PG Officers should be developed as determined to be necessary by the PG Academic Convenor. (Unfortunately, research did not result in resources and models in this area.)

Supporting Evidence

- Some universities host two-part training (independent and synchronous). In these cases, the synchronous sessions are interactive (University of Glasgow's is skills based; University of Edinburgh's is focused on asking questions and community building.)
- Conversations with other universities suggest that PG students tend to respond better to training that is tailored or directed at their specific cohort, e.g. PGT students. (University of Edinburgh, University of Glasgow, University of Sheffield.)
- Feedback from the School Presidents focus group suggests that lack of training makes it difficult for them to chair/prioritise PG-specific meetings and issues. (See also **1.1: Structure** where it is advised that School Presidents no longer supervise PG Reps and **1.2: Student–Staff Meetings**.)
- One suggestion from the PG Rep focus group was to provide relevant University staff members, e.g. DoPGTs/DoPGRS, training on their role within student representation, so it is clearer what their responsibilities are.
- Conversations with other universities suggest that online training has increased participation and engagement from representatives (University of Edinburgh, Imperial College London.)
- In the PG Rep focus group, returning representatives described yearly training as “unnecessary” and “redundant.”
- The University of Edinburgh has a section of their training dedicated to other resources that representatives will frequently need to contact, as well as advice on how and when to escalate an issue up to the next level of the representation system.
- Feedback from the PG Rep focus group indicates that improvements to delivery of training can be made to both format and content. Participants suggested a more streamlined approach (i.e. more reading/self-directed) as well as a specific focus on the duties and processes of being a representative.

- Survey data suggests that “Additional Training” was one of the top three most effective incentives that would encourage participation in the representation system.
- Models and links to other universities’ training programmes are available in **Appendix B**.

Resources and Timeline

- An electronic resource (e.g. MS Forms; MS Sway; Moodle) should be developed to host Part One of the training.
- A dedicated MS Teams area and/or in-person facilities will be required for Part Two of training.
- Staff time from the DoEd and PG Academic Convenor, as well as support staff from the Students’ Association and University will be required to plan annual training. Training should be implemented by the PG Academic Convenor and DoEd.
- Revisions to the training should be designed during spring/summer 2021 to be put in place by the October elections and PG Reps should be given adequate time to complete Part (1) before Part (2) is carried out.

3.6: Social and Networking Opportunities: Build in more mechanisms for social and networking opportunities among PG Reps.

Additional Details and Context

- Suggestions for such mechanisms include: regular social events for representatives (e.g. twice per semester); a University-wide conference for representatives; social pages within the MS Teams area (see **3.4: Handbook and Tangible Resources**); and training or networking events for subsections of PG Reps (e.g. for a specific faculty or group of subjects.)
- More research may yield additional suggestions for improving social and networking opportunities among PG Reps.

Supporting Evidence

- Other universities hold formal social events for student representatives (Imperial College London, University of the Highlands and Islands, University of Glasgow.)
- Some of the universities researched hold an annual university-wide conference for student representatives (University of the Highlands and Islands, University of Glasgow.)
- Conversations with other universities have suggested that many of their PG Reps volunteer for the roles to try and meet new people (University of Edinburgh.)
- Other universities host regular representative lunches or social events throughout the academic year for PG Reps (University of York, University of Edinburgh.)
- The PG Rep focus group suggested that more time should be dedicated to getting to know the other PG Reps, especially those within the same school.

Resources and Timeline

- Social events, conferences, or other networking opportunities for PG students could fall under the remit of the PG Academic Convenor. Anything University-wide would require collaboration with UG representatives and the involvement of the DoEd.
- The organisation of events would require student and staff time and possibly financial resources— though an exact budget is not discernable at this time.

- A specific timeline is dependent on which events are prioritised by the PG Academic Convenor and the DoEd, and is therefore not available at this time.
- Additional research and budgetary development could be carried out over the 2021/22 academic year.

3.7: Communication: Give all PG representatives the means to contact the students they represent within the first week of their term.

Additional Details and Context

- There should be a standardised policy expectation that schools must provide representatives with the means to contact the students they represent, either by:
 - (1) giving representatives access to a mailing list/contact details for their constituents;
 - (2) giving representatives a process to send out messages to their constituents through another staff member.
 - For autonomy, efficiency, and timing, (1) is strongly preferable, though may be more work for Schools to implement in the short term.

Supporting Evidence

- During the PG Rep focus group, access to mailing lists and contact details for their cohorts varied widely by School, and some representatives were completely denied access throughout their term.
- The School President focus group widely agreed that it was difficult to contact PG students specifically, due to mailing list delays and complications.
- It is difficult for representatives to communicate the changes and feedback they have gathered to their peers if they are unable to easily contact them.
- Survey data states that 37% of students who feel ineffectively represented are “never” contacted by their current class or PGR Rep.
- Early delivery of communication tools was cited as common practice in conversations with other universities (Imperial College London, University of Edinburgh). Those which did not have a mechanism in place found communication between PG representatives and their cohorts to be a barrier (University of Glasgow, University of Sheffield.)
- This change was recommended by the PG Academic Convenor at the beginning of the academic year in her report to the Academic Monitoring Group.

Resources and Timeline

- An unknown level of IT and administrative support will be required to ensure that representatives have access to mailing lists and other relevant contact details.
- Policy should be revised spring/summer 2021 in order to allow IT to create necessary mailing lists at the beginning of the 2021/22 academic year.

Recommendations for Theme 4: Recruiting and Incentives

4.1: Pay: Convert the PG Academic Convenor’s role into a paid, part-time student position.

Additional Details and Context

- Proposed new responsibilities to be added to the role of the PG Academic Convenor include: line managing the PGT and PGR Presidents; line managing the PG Officers; overseeing the PG Election; posting election results; ensuring that every school has at least one PGT and one PGR Rep; overseeing PG Rep training (in collaboration with the DoEd); making annual revisions to the PG representation handbook; and overseeing the Handover process.
 - A more formal overview of the changes to this position is described in **1.1: Structure and Appendix A.**
- Human resources staff (in both the Students' Association and University) should be responsible for determining classification and pay rates for this position.
 - It is worth noting that international students can work a maximum of 20 hours per week.
- While evidence (see below) suggests that paying other roles would increase participation, this is not common practice in other PG representation systems. Therefore no recommendation is being made to compensate positions other than the PG Academic Convenor at this time, but could be considered in later years.
- The interns and leadership team also discussed the possibility of the PG Academic Convenor being hired/appointed by the DoEd, however, it was ultimately concluded that giving PG students the chance to vote for their top representative was most important. The selection method for the PG Academic Convenor could be assessed in future years.

Supporting Evidence

- The immense number of new responsibilities, including supervision of representatives, recommended in this report support the need to compensate the PG Academic Convenor. The time commitment required to execute these responsibilities prevents the PG Academic Convenor from pursuing other paid work.
- The University of St Andrews allocates fewer financial resources to student representation –specifically PG representation– than peer universities.
 - Several universities have allocated financial resources to have a paid PG sabbatical officer or even multiple PG sabbatical officers (e.g. University of Cambridge, University of York, University of Colorado, Boulder).
 - Most universities have multiple full-time staff positions supporting student representation from within their unions, (University of York; Imperial College London; University of Edinburgh; Cambridge University; University of Sheffield) whereas St Andrews only allocates funding for one, part-time support staff.
 - Imperial College London Graduate Students' Union (separate union for PG students) President performs some similar functions to the PG Academic Convenor, and is compensated with a £10,000 stipend for the academic year.
- Survey data indicates that monetary compensation for representatives would be the most effective incentive to encourage PG students to participate in the representation system.
- Feedback from the PG Rep focus group supported the idea that offering monetary compensation would encourage students holding positions within the representation system to fulfil their responsibilities.

- None of the other universities we have researched pay student representatives below the sabbatical level, however, the University of Sheffield offers monetary compensation to their students for any extra responsibilities they are asked to carry out (at the discretion of the subject department.)

Resources and Timeline

- New financial resources would need to be allocated to finance the role of the PG Academic Convenor.
 - Human resources staff in the Students' Association and University should be involved in determining a classification and appropriate salary information for this position.
- Staff time will be required to create a formal position description for the PG Academic Convenor.
- Appropriate supervisory training would be required to allow the DoEd (and/or Students' Association staff members) to supervise the PG Academic Convenor.
- There would need to be a method of confirming that the PG Academic Convenor was completing their role responsibilities, which would likely include staff involvement.

4.2: Representative Fulfillment and Satisfaction: Collect data from representatives during Handover by asking targeted questions regarding satisfaction and fulfillment.

Additional Details and Context

- This data should be collected as a part of the new Handover process, described in **3.3: Handovers**. A separate section of the Handover process should include questions regarding representative fulfillment, satisfaction, and effectiveness.
- Suggested questions to include in this questionnaire: (1) To what extent do you agree/disagree with the statement: "I feel satisfied in my role as a representative"?; (2) To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statement: "I feel effective in my role as a representative"; (3) Which resources did you find most helpful?; (4) To what extent do you agree/disagree with the statement: "I felt supported by other representatives"?; (5) To what extent do you agree/disagree with the statement: "I felt supported in my role by University staff members"?; (6) To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "I feel my input as a Rep was valued by staff"?; (7) To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "I felt supported by the Students' Association in my role this year"?; (8) Would you recommend the PG Rep role to others (yes or no)?
 - Free response areas should be strategically placed throughout in order to allow representatives to expand on problems/successes in more detail.
- Data from the Fulfillment and Satisfaction section of the questionnaire should be aggregated and anonymised before it is distributed to all representatives. Individual challenges/opportunities should first be reviewed by the PG Academic Convenor to suggest improvements.
- Gathering data on the satisfaction of representatives would allow any changes made to the representation system to be monitored and evaluated and would highlight aspects of the system and of specific positions which could be further improved.

Supporting Evidence

- In the PG Rep focus group, several representatives described the role as “equal parts frustrating and fulfilling.”
- Other universities hold an annual survey gathering feedback about the representation system from representatives, including information about how satisfied representatives are with their roles (University of Glasgow, University of Edinburgh.)
- The University of York is gathering perceptions on these areas in order to create a longer-term academic representation strategy to guide priorities for future years.
- St Andrews currently has no way of measuring representative satisfaction on an annual, or even regular, basis.

Resources and Timeline

- A survey/questionnaire to evaluate representatives’ satisfaction should be developed by the end of academic year 2020/21. It could be reused each year with few changes.
- The results would need to be analysed each year in time for the incoming DoEd to implement any suggested changes for the following year (September/October).
- Recommended Implementor: PG Academic Convenor.

Recommendation 4.3: Non-Monetary Incentives: Create new non-monetary incentives to reward and recognise PG Reps, in-line with other universities.

Additional Details and Context

- The most influential three incentives that have been identified are: (1) formal recognition on academic transcript; (2) additional opportunities for training; (3) mentoring scheme.
- (1) **Recognition on academic transcript** (HEAR) for representatives is common practice at most other universities in Scotland and the UK. This is a formal way of acknowledging the contributions representatives have made during their volunteer terms, and building their CVs.
- (2) **Additional training opportunities** –in areas such as chairing meetings, public speaking, or negotiation skills– expand student representatives’ skills and CVs. Additional training also makes them more effective leaders in their roles.
- (3) A **mentoring scheme** offers additional potential for professional and skills development. Though no other universities currently offer a mentoring scheme between representatives and university staff members, the Students’ Association could develop such partnerships. (It may be beneficial to involve entities such as St Leonard’s College in the design of outcomes and structure for mentoring opportunities).

Supporting Evidence

- 66% of respondents indicated that formal recognition on their transcript would make them “more likely” to be interested in the role. (29% stated it would not affect their interest either positively or negatively.)
- 59% of respondents indicated that additional opportunities for training would make them “more likely” to be interested in the role. (36% stated it would not affect their interest either positively or negatively.)

- 52% of respondents indicated that a mentoring scheme would make them “more likely” to be interested in the role. (44% stated it would not affect their interest either positively or negatively.)
- Many of the universities that were researched recognise when students hold positions within the student representation system on their academic transcript via HEAR accreditation (University of Glasgow, University of Edinburgh, University of West London, University of Sheffield.)
- Several other universities offer additional training sessions for representatives (University of Sheffield, University of the Highlands and Islands, Imperial College London).
- The University of Edinburgh's “[Edinburgh Award](#)” programme may be a helpful model for skills development in-lieu of a mentoring scheme. This programme offers representatives (and other student leaders) additional training and guidance in extra/co-curricular skills with recognised credit that is attached to their HEAR.

Resources and Timeline

- (1) Enabling recognition on student transcripts (HEAR) would take University staff time and require verification that students in these roles had fulfilled their duties, requiring schools to confirm representatives’ attendance at SSCCs and the Students’ Association to confirm attendance at other relevant meetings and completion of mandatory training.
- The timeline to implement recognition on transcripts for representatives is unknown at this time.
- (2) Optional training sessions would need to be designed, provided, and promoted either through the Students’ Association or through St Leonard’s College or the Centre for Educational Enhancement and Development (CEED).
- The timeline to implement these training sessions is unknown.
- (3) A mentoring system would need to be further researched and developed over the course of the following academic year, for implementation in 2022/23. Resources would likely include staff time (especially in the Students’ Association and St. Leonard’s College) and commitment and involvement from administrators.

4.4: Standardise Recruiting Methods: Design a comprehensive communication strategy from the Students’ Association to be distributed by Schools to their PG students.

Additional Details and Context

- The communications strategy should include: drafting communications for schools to send on behalf of the Students’ Association to recruit representatives; creating communication timelines; and identifying key support staff. Additionally, graphics for emails, social media, and posters could also be developed and made accessible to Schools in an effort to increase the visibility of the Students’ Association to its PG students (e.g. University of Sheffield).
- Recruiting methods should be standardised in an effort to ensure there is clarity over who is responsible for recruiting PGT and PGR student representatives. Currently academic staff, School Presidents and the PG Academic Convenor all play a role in PG representative recruitment to varying degrees for different Schools.

Supporting Evidence

- 30% of students who did not vote in their class representative elections “did not know” about the election.
- The University of Sheffield provides staff (who promote their student representation system) with branded materials to use in emails, on social media accounts, and for posters. They also have a timeline aimed at staff, and publicly available, outlining when things should be done in relation to appointing academic representatives.
- The University of Edinburgh has developed a timelined communication strategy to reach PG students through their academic school/department to encourage election participation (both turnout and filling positions).
- Imperial College London noted that schools and departments are also strongly involved in recruiting PG students to fill roles.
- The PG Rep focus group revealed that many PG Reps were encouraged to run or heard about election opportunities through academic staff in their School. Anecdotally, PG students are much more connected to their academic discipline’s School than University-wide resources like the Students’ Association.
- According to survey data, 24% of students will not be interested in the role of PG representative, regardless of incentivisation.

Resources and Timeline

- Develop a communication strategy during spring/summer 2021, to be implemented during the October 2021 elections.
- Resources required will primarily be staff time; University contact details; marketing/PR support.
- Recommended Implementor: DoEd and PG Academic Convenor.

Recommendations for Theme 5: Removing Barriers

5.1: Postgraduate Officers: Create University-wide PG Officer roles for specific PG student groups.

Additional Details and Context

- Suggested PG Officer Roles include: (1) Part-time; (2) International; (3) Distance-Learning; and (4) Graduate Teaching. The Students’ Association may consider adding other roles as deemed necessary.
- All of these roles should hold a voting position on the PG Academic Forum.
- These positions should be elected during the October PG elections by a postgraduate-wide vote.
 - Both PGT and PGR students should be eligible to run for and hold these positions.
- Information on estimated workload, responsibilities, and meetings attended for PG Officers can be found in **Appendix A**.

- PG Officers work with the PG Academic Convenor on issues that affect PG students in the interest groups they represent.
- PG Officers would need the ability to communicate with the cohort of students they represent, including both PGTs and PGRs. (There is the potential for them to run/administrate official social media channels for their specific interest groups.)
- PG Officers would need to form a close relationship with the following individuals: the PGT/PGR President; the PG Development Officer; the PG Society President; Council members; and the Sabbatical Officers.
- (1) Part-Time PG Officer:
 - The Part-Time PG Officer would be responsible for representing and advocating for issues affecting part-time PGT and PGR students across the University. Sample issue areas include: building community; engagement with the University; scheduling/accessibility issues; balance between academics and external commitments (e.g. caring responsibilities).
 - There needs to be provision for this role to be carried out remotely, including the attendance of PGT/PGR Forums and PG Academic Forums.
 - Allowances may need to be made for flexibility in scheduling as many part-time students have other commitments such as caring responsibilities and/or paid work outside of their studies.
- (2) International PG Officer:
 - The International PG Officer would be responsible for representing and advocating for issues affecting international PGT and PGR students across the University. Sample issue areas include: visas/immigration; finances; mental health; and workload considerations.
 - International students often require more direct training regarding the PG representation system at St Andrews and provided with more context and resources to feel confident in running for a position. One way to address this may be to incorporate orientation guidance for those who may not understand the representation structure.
 - Students with English as a foreign language should be supported by the Students' Association where appropriate.
- (3) Distance-Learning PG Officer:
 - The Distance Learning PG Officer would be responsible for representing and advocating for issues affecting PG students who do not live in St Andrews. Sample issue areas include: online accessibility; commuting; creating remote communities; access to support resources.
 - There needs to be provision for this role to be carried out remotely, including the attendance of PGT/PGR Forums and PG Academic Forums.
- (4) Graduate Teaching PG Officer:
 - The Graduate Teaching PG Officer would be responsible for representing and advocating for issues affecting PG students who hold teaching positions at the University. Sample issue areas include: wellbeing; academic preparation/training; access to support resources; and expanding social and networking opportunities.

- Currently there is no direct representation for students who are also staff members within the University's representation system.

Supporting Evidence

- Distance learners were 11% less likely to know who their current Class Representative is compared to students who live in St Andrews.
- Several qualitative responses to the survey suggested that part-time studies were a limitation to participation in the student representation system.
- Several qualitative responses to the survey suggested that international students did not feel as though they were eligible to run for representative positions, and cited being an international student as a barrier to participating in the class representatives system.
- PG students who hold teaching positions within the University face specific issues due to their status as both staff and student, as well as their unique responsibilities within the student population.
- Many other universities around the UK (and the world) have specific demographic positions built into their PG representative structure (e.g. University of Edinburgh, University of York, University of Glasgow).
- From conversations with other universities, many students' unions also find it difficult to engage specific subpopulations within the PG community (e.g. University of Edinburgh, Imperial College London).
- Conversations with other universities indicated that international students sometimes need more groundwork to feel comfortable participating in the Scottish/UK academic representation system (e.g. the University of Edinburgh).

Resources and Timeline

- Though no financial resources are anticipated for the creation of these new positions, financial resources are required to support the PG Academic Convenor role, which would supervise these Officers (see **4.1: Pay**). Additionally, staff training time and the development of new resources to prepare these representatives will be necessary.
- IT time would be required to develop a contact list for each group and update them year on year.
- Timeline: Revise policy and representative structure (summer 2021); develop role descriptions for PG Officers (summer 2021); include PG Officer roles in October PG elections (autumn 2021).

Recommendation 5.2: Diversity and Inclusion: Include a diversity and inclusion statement in all PG representation position descriptions.

Additional Details and Context

- Possible wording for this statement might be: *"The St Andrews Students' Association is committed to ensuring that all its students are supported through the academic representation system. We therefore endeavor to build a representation system that works for everyone, which includes perspectives from students with the following student statuses and/or marginalised characteristics: International students; Part-time students; Distance-learning students; Students with disabilities; BAME students; Students with*

marginalised genders; Students with diverse sexualities. The Students' Association welcomes and encourages these students to stand for election."

- The goal of this statement is to reassure and encourage students that different cultural backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences are of value within the student representation system and are *necessary* elements of representation.
- The Students' Association should state that accessibility needs will be met within the role description and in all recruitment materials.

Supporting Evidence

- 5% of survey respondents indicated that "assurance that their accessibility needs would be met" was currently a barrier to them participating in the representation system.
- Several qualitative responses to the survey suggested that international students did not feel as though they were eligible to run for representative positions.
- None of the universities researched had a diversity and inclusion statement in their role descriptions or promotion materials, however this is an important and necessary step toward ensuring the student representation system is inclusive of all students. St Andrews would be among the first to take such steps.

Resources and Timeline

- No financial resources will be required for this recommendation. This could be accomplished simultaneously with the revision of role descriptions.
- Draft statement (spring 2021); revise policy, recruitment documents, and position descriptions (summer 2021); begin new academic year with revised documents (autumn 2021).

5.3: Online Participation: Capitalise on changes made for covid-19 restrictions by continuing to enable representatives to serve remotely.

Additional Details and Context

- Provide alternative arrangements for SSCCs (host them via MS Teams), ensure training has an online option, and strengthen use of online tools to support representatives (e.g. Qualtrics, MS Teams, MS Forms, etc.).
- Training should continue to be offered online either in addition to or in lieu of in-person; online training is more accessible and has seen an increase in participation. (This is also mentioned in **3.5: Training**.)
- Scheduling of committee meetings and other duties could be made more flexible by continuing online communications. This also supports carers who take on the role.

Supporting Evidence

- In the PG Rep focus group, several students, especially PGR Reps, said that online access has increased participation in their cohorts.
- Approximately 25% of survey respondents do not live in St Andrews; an additional 5% have opted not to live in St Andrews this year due to covid-19 concerns.
- One qualitative comment on the survey pointed out that PGR students conducting field research are effectively barred from participating in the class representative system in normal years and that online options are essential for these students.

- Approximately 17% of survey respondents had a registered disability.
- Approximately 3% of survey respondents are carers.
- Anecdotally, several of the universities we have talked to have seen increases in distance learners' participation this academic year due to these structural and format changes.

Resources and Timeline

- Additional software may be required. Training on how to effectively use such software should be developed to be provided to representatives.
- Staff time and training should be allocated to effectively train staff members involved in relevant committees (for example, SSCs and the PG Academic Forum).
- No timeline is available for this recommendation as it is about maintaining existing practices rather than making changes.

5.4: Time Commitments: Clearly outline the number of working hours expected per week in each role description (and relevant recruitment and training materials).

Additional Details and Context

- Data suggests that one of the reasons PG students do not take on these roles is due to a lack of clarity on the time commitments. Some are concerned their other obligations and commitments would prevent them from taking on these roles, or are limited in the number of unpaid hours they can take on each week. The barrier of limited time is often closely connected to financial barriers, as some students have to prioritise paid work over volunteer opportunities.
- Communicating the expected number of hours is intended to provide transparency and clarity for students, allowing them to decide if they have the capacity to take on the role.
- The following are *estimates* for the number of working hours that each volunteer position would undertake:
 - PG Reps: 2-4 hours per week.
 - PGT/PGR Presidents: 10-15 hours per week.
 - PG Officers: 10 hours per week.

Supporting Evidence

- 31% of survey respondents suggested that “concern about the time commitment” was a reason they did not consider candidacy as a class representative.
- In most of the qualitative response sections of the survey, students indicated that they were committed to other opportunities, including: academics; paid work outside their programme of study; unpaid/voluntary roles; and other personal obligations.
- In the qualitative response section on barriers, the most common response was that students lacked the time to take on the role.
- Qualitative survey responses indicated that some PGT students were unwilling to commit the time because their course only lasted for one year. Other universities indicated similar evidence anecdotally (University of Edinburgh, University of York).
- Other universities stated that PGRs are often expected to commit to full-time hours and therefore reluctant to take on additional responsibilities within their university (University of Glasgow, University of Sheffield, University of Edinburgh, University of York).

- The University of Edinburgh estimates that programme representatives would spend about 15 hours per month on their role, and section reps (University-wide) about 10 hours per month.
- Imperial College London estimates that Department Representatives would commit between 3-5 hours per week. Course representatives' time commitment is estimated to be "no more than 3 hours per week."
- Research from other universities and focus groups indicates widely that PGR students treat their programme as a job. This contrasts with the mindset of UG and PGT students, who generally view their programmes as continuing their education (University of Edinburgh, Imperial College London, University of Glasgow, University of Sheffield).

Resources and Timeline

- Staff time to update relevant materials will be required.
- Role descriptions should be updated over the summer of 2021; changes to advertising and promotion should begin during the autumn 2021 elections.
- Recommended Implementor: DoEd and PG Academic Convenor.