Postgraduate Representatives Handbook

2021/22

YOUR UNION

UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION

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Introduction

Welcome to the Academic Representation team at the University of St Andrews. You are a part of a wide community of leaders working to improve the student experience and to amplify the student voice.

This handbook is designed to support postgraduate representatives and complement training sessions, the Microsoft Teams area, and guidance from staff members. The information you find here will help guide you throughout all stages of your term.

Note: Though your role title may look different based on your School, this handbook refers to all postgraduate course/class/year representatives as "PG Representatives" (or "PG Reps" for short).

Caroline McWilliams
Postgraduate Academic Convenor
2021-2022

Duties and Responsibilities

<u>Role Description for PGT and PGR Reps</u>

Time Commitment and Details
- Elected, voluntary position
- Line-managed by the PGT or PGR President.
  - (Collaborates with PG Officers, School President(s) and other PG Representatives)
- Estimated workload is 1-3 hours a week; dependant on meeting schedule.
- Position serves from October through the following September.
- Option to serve partially or completely remotely

Requirements
- Complete mandatory representative training
- Report regularly to your PGT or PGR President (line manager)
- Stay up to date on information relevant to student representatives (from the University and the Students' Association)
- Keep notes of challenges, successes, issues solved, and critical information during your term to create documentation for future representatives.
- Complete a formal handover report at the conclusion of your term.

Collecting Feedback & Analysis
- Use access provided by your School to introduce yourself to the students you represent
- Determine and execute effective feedback collection from your cohort; request feedback from students monthly and before all SSCCs and PGT/PGR Forums
- Collate and analyse student feedback; make decisions about how best to report student opinions and requests to staff
- Elevate broader issues to PGT or PGR President and/or PG Officers and/or School Presidents as appropriate.
- Always reply to student inquiries and concerns in a timely manner (even if just to refer them to another resource.)

Representing Student Views
- Attend SSCC meetings within your school (twice per semester)
- Attend PGT/PGR Forums (twice per semester)
- Work with staff to enact changes, compromises, and improvements based on student feedback

- Follow up regularly with staff to ensure solutions are implemented in a timely manner
- Liaise between students, staff, and the Students' Association
- Bring school-wide or undergraduate issues to the attention of your School President

Reporting Outcomes
- Report outcomes of student feedback to your cohort (e.g. through a regular newsletter/email)
- Communicate outcomes/resolutions to the students who submitted the feedback
- Share outcomes of SSCCs with other representatives through PGT/PGR Forums and other methods

What is NOT expected?
- You are not expected to organise events but you are welcome to collaborate with the PG Society and/or your School's Society as you see fit.
- Solving problems that affect postgraduate students outside of your school/cohort (these should instead be elevated to your PGT/PGR President or other student leaders as appropriate)
- You are not responsible for issues of finance, mental health, or pastoral care. Instead, refer students to relevant University resources, such as the Advice and Support Centre.

Benefits of the Role
- Improve the postgraduate student experience at St Andrews
- Gain administrative knowledge of representation system and school
- Access key insight into the academic running of your school
- Develop skills, such as: Leadership, Teamwork, Communication, Problem Solving, Meeting Organisation, Conflict Resolution, Time Management, Negotiation, Public Speaking
- Networking opportunities with other PG representatives and academic staff in your school
- Recognition on Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) Transcript
- A 'Postgraduate Rep' LinkedIn Badge
- Eligibility for Class Rep Awards and Proctor's Award

Eligibility Criteria
- Must be a currently enrolled student in the postgraduate programme you wish to represent at St Andrews;
- In good standing with the University and the Students' Association in terms of disciplinary matters;
- Will be an enrolled student until the end of the current academic year.

Requirements

PG Reps are expected to fulfil all of the duties outlined in the role description. However, in order to receive recognition on their Higher Education Academic Record (HEAR), PG Reps must complete mandatory training, attend their School's SSCCs, attend either PGT or PGR Forums, and complete their Handover Document. If these requirements are not met, you will not receive HEAR recognition for your role as a PG Rep, nor will you be eligible to receive other benefits or rewards (e.g. nomination for the Proctor's Award, LinkedIn Badge).

It is important to remember that as a PG Rep, you are an elected official entrusted to speak on behalf of your peers. If you have concerns about your ability to meet the requirements of your role, please talk to your line manager (the PGT President for PGT Reps or the PGR President for PGR Reps).

You may also be asked to participate in other various School committees and meetings. These vary substantially by School and position, so if you have questions be sure to talk to your DoPGT/DoPGR or School President for more guidance.

Training and Support

<u>Training</u>

<u>Part One</u>
Part One of training is to be undertaken online and completed individually. The PG Academic Convenor will set the due date for when this training needs to be completed and will distribute the training link electronically in October 2021.

This section of the training covers foundations of being a class representative, including topics such as how the representative system is structured at St Andrews and what important resources you should know about.

(Representatives who have previously served a term as a PG Rep at St Andrews may elect to skip Part One of the training in returning years.)


<u>Part Two</u>
Part Two of training is to be undertaken in a group, either online or in-person (as determined by the PG Academic Convenor). This section of the training is your chance to meet other PG Representatives and to ask any questions you may have following Part One of the training. This section will also include an overview of the current state of the PG Representation System and will provide you with next steps to get you started in your new role.

The PG Academic Convenor will contact you to inform you of specific dates for the live component of training.

Microsoft Teams

The Students Association has set up a Microsoft Teams Channel for Academic Representatives, where you can contact other PG Reps and seek support for any issues you are having. This is a great resource for you to quickly communicate with other student leaders and to ask questions in real time. It is also a space for the PGT/PGR Presidents to quickly gather opinions from each of you.
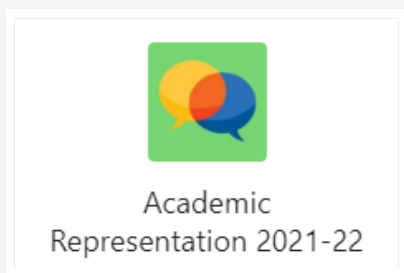
Getting Access
At the start of your term, you will be invited to join the Team by the PG Academic Convenor. If you have not been added to the Team by the first week of November, feel free to reach out to them to request access (pgconven@).
If you need help setting up Microsoft Teams, please see the IT Department's guidance page.

Using the Teams Area
The Teams area is organised into separate channels based on representative group, such as PGT and PGR Reps or by School. You will also be able to use it to contact other members of the PG Academic Representation team, including PG Officers, the PGT and PGR Presidents, the PG Academic Convenor, the DoEd, and undergraduate representatives.

The Teams area is a space to ask questions or to express concerns to other student representatives. It is also a place to collaborate on shared initiatives or to swap resources with other representatives and can be used to see if the issues you are facing are also happening in other Schools. If you're not sure who to ask about a topic, using the Teams area is a great way to crowdsource an answer.
The PG Academic Convenor and other leaders frequently check the Teams area and will be able to respond. Sometimes other PG Reps will be able to answer your questions too. If you know the answer for another representative, do drop them a message!

Occasionally, the PGT/PGR President or another PG Officer will have questions for you or groups of reps, so log in to check the Teams area regularly (a few times per week) or leave it open in the background when you're doing other work.

Microsoft Teams (Continued)

Appropriate Use
Please DO NOT put confidential or personal information about yourself or others in the Teams area. If you want to speak with an individual, please email rather than using the Teams area and keep social/fun messages to the designated channels, so that the main channels remain uncluttered.

Additional Resources
Additional resources and guidance can be found on the Students' Association website. If you are unable to find the information you are looking for, please email the PG Academic Convenor (pgconven@).

Working Remotely

The Students' Association is committed to supporting PG Reps who wish to serve remotely. As such, Training can be completed entirely online, and the Students' Association is encouraging Schools to hold SSCCs online where appropriate. Where this is not possible, you can pass on feedback to another of your School's PGT or PGR Reps to present at SSCCs. You may also wish to report feedback to the Distance Learning and Commuter PG Officer where you are representing a cohort which studies/works remotely. If you require additional support please contact the PG Academic Convenor (pgconven@).

Reporting Structure

The flow chart on the following page describes the reporting structure of the PG Representation System.

Director of Education (DoEd)
The DoEd is a sabbatical officer within the Students Association charged with overseeing the representative system as a whole. They manage both postgraduate and undergraduate affairs and are the main spokesperson for students on issues related to academics.

Postgraduate Academic Convenor (PG AC)
The PG Academic Convenor manages the PG side of the representation system and is the main spokesperson for issues affecting PGT and PGR students. The PG Academic Convenor is responsible for running PG Elections, hosting PG Rep Training, and overseeing Handover. They also attend a variety of University and Students Association meetings. The PG Academic Convenor reports to the DoEd.

PG REP REPORTING STRUCTURE

PG ACADEMIC FORUM

DoEd

PG ACADEMIC CONVENOR

PGT FORUM

PGT PRES.

PG OFFICERS

PGR FORUM

PGR PRES.
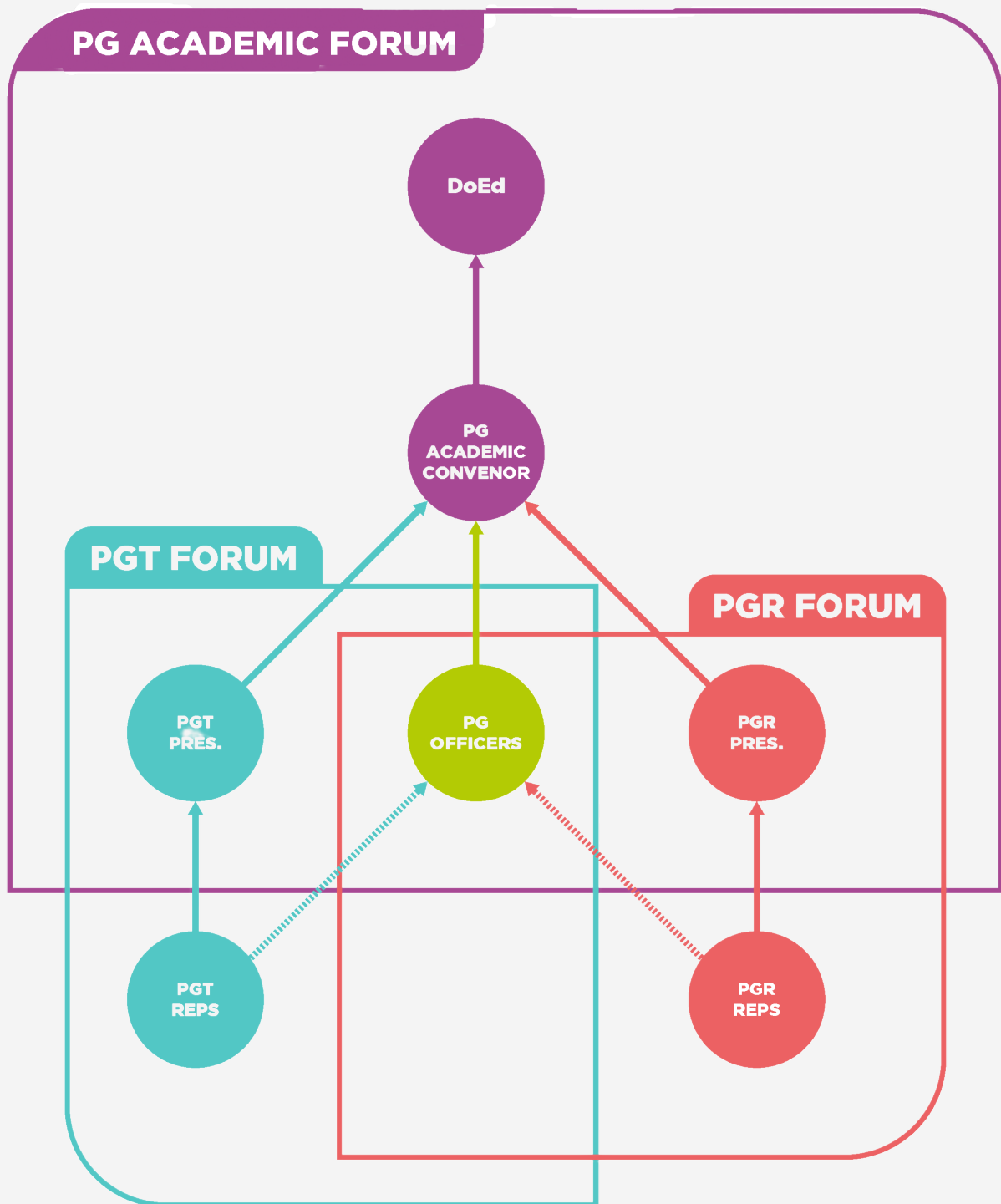
PGT REPS

PGR REPS

Reporting Structure (Continued)

PGT & PGR Presidents
The PGT President oversees all PGT Reps and the PGR President oversees all PGR Reps. They are each responsible for handling issues that affect all PGT or PGR students and provide regular guidance to the Reps they oversee as well as chairing a regular forum for their reps. They report to the PG Academic Convenor. PGT Reps report to the PGT President and PGR Reps report to the PGR President.

PG Officers
There are three PG Officers who advocate for specific groups of postgraduate students facing distinct challenges: International, Part-Time, and Distance Learning & Commuting,. These Officers speak on behalf of postgraduates in these areas, attend meetings relevant to the students they represent (including PGT and PGR Forums), and coordinate with University staff members. PG Officers and PG Reps support one another, though there is no formal reporting relationship. The PG Officers report to the PG Academic Convenor.

Undergraduate Roles (Not Diagramed)
In addition to the postgraduate roles, there are also many undergraduate Reps who you will interact with:

School President – the undergraduate student charged with advocating for all students within your academic discipline. Though you do not report directly to your School President, you will work with them on School-related matters and meetings and will keep each other up to date on your work. They are responsible for arranging SSCCs.

Faculty Presidents – these representatives oversee the School Presidents in Arts & Divinity or Science & Medicine. They report to the DoEd and chair the Students' Association's Education Subcommittee.

UG Class Reps – all Schools have undergraduate representatives at the course, programme, class, or year levels who speak for their peers and report directly to the School President.

While the postgraduate and undergraduate systems operate independently day-to-day, they are both part of the same Academic Representation Network. All student representatives are working toward the same goals, and together we have a stronger voice than separately. Be sure to check in with your undergraduate peers and counterparts and work collaboratively to solve shared challenges and share opportunities.

Reporting Structure (Continued)

Key Staff (Not Diagramed)

The Academic Representation Co-Ordinator (ARC) – is a permanent staff member within the Students Association, assigned to assist the Director of Education, the Postgraduate Academic Convenor, and all Academic Representatives. The ARC supports student volunteers by providing advice, context, history, and resources (like this handbook, training, and election support).

In addition, there are many key University staff members who may play a role in your projects as a representative. Below you will find a brief listing of some of the people you might encounter, and how they interact with PG Representatives.

Proctor – Also known as the Vice Principal for Education; responsible for creating and executing the University's overall educational strategy.
- You may encounter the Proctor at a Postgraduate Academic Forum meeting.

Provost – Works to promote the interest of postgraduates across the University and to champion the development of postgraduate education and research.
- You may encounter the Provost at meetings of the Postgraduate Academic Forum or the PGT/PGR Forums.

Dean of Learning and Teaching – Responsible for the strategic overview of the taught curriculum and has line management responsibility for the Associate Deans Education, the Associate Deans Students and the Associate Deans Curriculum
- You may encounter the Dean of Learning and Teaching during your School's annual review process.

Associate Provosts (Education and Students)– Responsible for curriculum design and policy related to PGT and PGR programmes, as well as other elements, such as academic misconduct.
- You may encounter the Associate Provosts at the PGT/PGR Forum.

Director of Postgraduate Taught Studies (DoPGT) – The DoPGT is a position held by a staff member in each school, and is responsible for all Postgraduate Taught programmes and matters in the School.
- You may encounter your school's DoPGT during your SSCC meetings.

Director of Postgraduate Research (DoPGR) – The DoPGR is a position held by a staff member in each school, and is responsible for all Postgraduate Research programmes and matters in the School.
- You may encounter your school's DoPGR during your SSCC meetings.

Gathering Student Feedback

Contacting Students

As a PG Rep your School should provide you with the means to contact the cohort you represent. It is worth reaching out to your School's admin team to ensure this is the case. Some Schools may require any communication be approved by the School President or a member of staff to ensure students are not overwhelmed with information, particularly at the beginning of a semester. If you are still having issues accessing contact information, please get in touch with your PG President.

Methods of Collecting Feedback

Students should feel free to contact you with feedback at any time, however it is especially important that you collect feedback prior to SSCCs. Below are some suggested methods of how to go about gathering feedback; you could use one or all of them depending on what is effective for your cohort.

In person – talking to your peers is a great way to gather feedback! One-to-one conversations can be helpful but group settings, such as lectures or research labs, will allow you to get more perspectives on an issue. You can simply ask your peers for their opinions, or you could ask them to write down their feedback anonymously on Post-it notes. You could also use a clicker question style quiz to gather a snapshot of student views.

Email – is a great way to reach out to your entire cohort, but remember to keep it short, sweet, and to the point!

Survey – a good way to get multiple responses on a topic and they can provide you with the numbers to support your points in an SSCC. You can create them using software such as Microsoft Forms or Qualtrics. You can also create an open feedback form for students to use anonymously throughout the year with this software as a way of keeping feedback channels open.

Online – other online resources you might want to try include Padlet which is an interactive noticeboard students can add to and see each others' responses, and Mentimeter which has a range of tools for collecting and analysing feedback.

Remember that collecting positive feedback can be just as helpful as negative feedback! It's important to know what is working for students, as well as what isn't.

Evaluating Feedback

Once you have successfully gathered feedback from your cohort, you will need to read through it. In some cases, you may need to collate responses, such as in the case of post–it notes or surveys. It is important that you look for common themes and recurring issues which are affecting multiple students and that you understand how issues are affecting students even where those issues do not affect you directly. In some cases, you may need to ask a student or students for clarification or more information to properly understand a situation.

Once you have gone through the feedback you have received, you should write down a list of the points raised to figure out the appropriate action to take.

Actioning, Escalating, and Referring Feedback

<u>Where to Present Feedback</u>

Once you have gathered and analysed student feedback, it is important to find the right place to present it, so that the feedback can be actioned. Here are some of the ways you might go about actioning feedback.

<u>At an SSCC Meeting</u>
Feedback that is not time-sensitive or concerns multiple staff members or individuals should be raised at your School's Student-Staff Consultative Committee (SSCC) meeting. The "Student-Staff Consultative Committees" Section goes into more detail about what SSCCs are and how they are run, but here are a few tips for discussing feedback during these meetings.

The first thing to do when you have an item for discussion is to put it on the agenda. You can email the Chair (usually your School President) in advance of the meeting to ask for a discussion point on the agenda. Next, be sure to discuss the topic with the other student representatives who will be present during the SSCC. Work together to come up with a plan to report on the issue or opportunity and create requested action steps.

Work together with the staff members to outline an action plan for implementation and agree on who is working on what next step. Be sure that the student representatives know who is following up with the staff members about each stage and put a follow up conversation on your next SSCC agenda to assess the changes.

Be sure to share the results of your successes or consider elevating the issue if you hit a roadblock.

<u>To Staff Members</u>
If an issue can be resolved by a single person (your DoPGT/DoPGR, for example), the best course of action is to just talk to them directly. Send an email to arrange a meeting, either in person or on Teams to talk about the issue or opportunity. Unless a matter is quickly resolved, talking face-to-face is usually the right approach.

Where to Present Feedback (Continued)

In the meeting, remember to present your peers' perspectives accurately and objectively. Be sure to reference data and provide quantitative numbers as often as possible (for example: "Two-thirds of the students in the course feel like they would benefit from a weekly drop-in time to ask questions" or, "Fifteen PGRs find the lab access hours are too restrictive for their research.")

When presenting feedback, come prepared with a suggested solution. Nobody likes having a problem thrown on their plate, so bringing a tangible action plan to the table is a great way to get the conversation going. Be prepared to negotiate and to work with the staff member to come up with a solution that works for everyone. Listen carefully to their responses to the feedback and take notes during the conversation. Ideally, at the end of the conversation, the two of you will agree on an action step or set of action steps to resolve the issue students are experiencing. Chart out who is going to do what, and what an adequate timeline for making changes might be. Follow up with the staff member at each stage of the process to ensure progress is being made.

If the meeting is a success, be sure to share the results with your peers and with other representatives (see the "Reporting Outcomes" Section). If things don't get resolved, you might need to escalate the issue up to another student leader. (See the section below on escalating issues).

To Other (Non-Teaching) Staff
Some feedback you receive as a representative may be directed toward other non-teaching staff members or administrators. For instance, you may have questions about building access or computer software in your school. Often, administrative assistants can still help you to resolve these issues, especially if you're unsure of where to take them. Talk to your School/department staff members to learn who to go to, or to see if they are willing to help bring the feedback to the relevant person themselves. If the issue extends beyond the scope of your role, escalate it up to another representative. The PGT/PGR President or your School President can help you direct feedback to the right person.

How to Escalate Issues

Sometimes, issues will be brought to your attention that are beyond your capacities as a PG Rep. Other times, staff members may be unwilling to work with you further on an issue. Your other representatives are here to help you in these cases.

To the PGT or PGR President
Your PGT or PGR President will likely be the most common person you talk to when you need to escalate an issue. No matter what stage the issue is at, setting up a discussion meeting with your President is a great first step. They can help you if you're not sure what to do with a piece of feedback or are unsure of how to proceed forward with an issue you are working on. They are also there to help on more clear-cut problems and can take over managing issues that are relevant to all PGT or PGR students. It is worth discussing putting the issue on the next PGT or PGR Forum agenda with your President, so that other representatives are aware of what is going on.
Be sure to bring as much information and context to your meeting with the PGT or PGR President as possible. Bring the original feedback, notes from meetings, relevant data, and any other information about your course/programme/School that may be helpful for them to know. Your President will let you know what they think the next steps are on this issue and may ask you to stay involved.

In sum, you can bring an issue to the attention of your PGT or PGR President if it meets any of the following criteria:
- You think it is relevant to PGT or PGR students in other programmes/Schools
- You aren't sure what to do with a piece of feedback
- You don't know how to proceed on resolving an issue
- You are facing opposition from staff
- You have a personal conflict of interest (see section below).

To the PG Officers
The PG Officers can help if you notice a challenge for a particular group of students that they speak for. The three PG Officers are: International, Part-Time, and Distance Learning & Commuting.

If you find that an issue you are dealing with affects one of these populations, you should bring it to the attention of the relevant PG Officer. Email them to set up a meeting, bringing as much relevant data and contextual information as possible to bring the Officer up to speed.

The PG Officer can step in as an additional resource to help you solve the problem and bring in additional resources for your students. They may want to discuss it at the next PGT, PGR, or Academic Forum as relevant.

In sum, you can bring an issue to the attention of a PG Officer if it meets any of the following criteria:
- You think it is relevant to International PG students
- You think it is relevant to Part-Time PG students
- You think it is relevant to Distance Learning and/or Commuting PG students

How to Escalate Issues (Continued)

To the PG Academic Convenor
If things are really serious, or if your PGT or PGR President thinks an issue needs more attention, they may recommend a meeting with the PG Academic Convenor. The Postgraduate Academic Convenor advocates on issues that affect all postgraduates at the University but should only rarely need to be involved.

Talk to your PGT or PGR President first, and if they think the issue needs to be brought up to the PG Academic Convenor, they will arrange a meeting for the three of you to talk. The PG Academic Convenor may suggest that the issue be discussed at the next PG Academic Forum and may invite you to attend that meeting.

In sum, you should talk to your PGT/PGR President before bringing an issue to the PG Academic Convenor.

To Your School President
Some issues you encounter may be applicable to the other students in your school, including undergraduates. In these cases, the right person to talk to is your School President, who is the main spokesperson for all students in your School.

You can find your School Presidents' contact information on the Students' Association Website. Email them to inform them of the issue, or to arrange a meeting to discuss it. They may also have insight into the historical context for this issue or know other staff members to talk to within your School.

They may invite you to attend the next SSCC meeting to discuss the issue or may even bring it up at the next Education Committee meeting if it is relevant to other School Presidents.

In sum, you can bring an issue to the attention of your School President if it meets any of the following criteria:
- You think it affects students in your School beyond the area you represent
- You think it affects undergraduates in your School
- You need help or historical information on the issue in your programme/School

Where to Escalate Issues Table

PGT/PGR President	**PG Officer**
- You think it is relevant to PGT or PGR students in other programmes/schools - You aren't sure what to do with a piece of feedback - You don't know how to proceed on resolving an issue - You are facing opposition from staff - You have a personal conflict of interest (see section below).	- You think it is relevant to International Postgraduate students - You think it is relevant to Part-Time Postgraduate students - You think it is relevant to Distance & Commuter Postgraduate students
PG Academic Convenor	**School President**
Talk to your PGT/PGR President first!	- You think it affects students in your School beyond the area you represent - You think it affects undergraduates in your School - You need help or historical information on the issue in your programme/School

Where to Refer Issues

Students you represent may bring you inquiries on personal matters or present issues that only affect individual students. In such cases, it is usually best to refer these individuals to another resource, either at the Students' Association, or in the University at large.

Students' Association Resources
The Students' Association offers a variety of resources to support students and operates independently from the University of St Andrews. The main landing page for Postgraduate Representation is a great place to start looking for support.

Where to Refer Issues (Continued)

One of the primary functions of the Students' Association is to advocate on student issues. There are a variety of representatives, volunteers, and staff members who can help students bring about broader change.

If a student comes to you with a wide-ranging issue (one, for instance, that affects all students or isn't necessarily academic), you might recommend that they get in-touch with someone at the Students Association.

The Sabbatical Officers, for instance, can help students with issues related to athletics, sustainability, general wellbeing, societies, or events/activities. Your elected Sabbs are great people to talk to if you or another student has an idea for a campaign. Other elected officers are also great resources for students, and their priorities are listed on the website. The University Rector and the Rectors Assessor can help advocate for policy changes at the university.

There are also several full-time, permanent staff members at the Students' Association, who can help students, the Academic Representation Co-Ordinator and Education Advocate in particular (email: cmg9@ or helphub@)

Other Students' Association resources you can refer students to include:
- Accommodation – help for students who live or plan to live in privately-owned accommodation, such as lease review and a "How to Rent" guide.
- Disabled Students Network – advocacy and support for students with disabilities.
- Education – for degree changes, leaves of absence, and other related advice.
- Mental Health – a listing of community resources that can help students dealing with a variety of challenges.
- Sexual Health – for information about contraception, period products, and STI testing.
- Saints LGBT+ – support for students who identify as LGBT+

University Resources
When students present individual or personal issues to you, your role as a representative is to help signpost them to the help they need.

The University of St Andrews has a comprehensive Advice and Support Centre that can help students on a variety of topics– including financial issues, mental health counseling, disabilities support, and even legal advice. This will often be the best place to refer students who are facing personal challenges.

Where to Refer Issues (Continued)

The Advice and Support Centre (ASC) can be reached at +44 (0)1334 46 2020 or via email at theasc@st-andrews.ac.uk. If you feel comfortable, you can help the student to make an appointment to talk to a wellbeing advisor about their circumstances.

St Leonard's College also provides support for postgraduate students, including advice and guidance, support and training, events, workshops, and funding information.

Other University resources you can refer students to include:
- Academic Advising – for concerns about a student's academic record or course path.
- Accommodation – support for students living in halls.
- Careers Centre – assistance with career planning, interview prep, and professional development workshop.
- Health Hub – provides support booking appointments and partners with the community hospital to provide services to students.
- Information Technology Support – for students having trouble with computers, telephones, or audio-visual equipment.
- Library – bookable workspaces, research questions, and some disabilities support
- Nightline – a late night helpline for St Andrews students. Normally operates Tuesdays, Fridays, and Sundays from 20:00 to 02:00.

If **a student is in a state of crisis**, you can call the University Security and Response Team at 01334 468999. In an emergency call 999.

Conflicts of Interest

Occasionally in your role, you may be asked to represent views that run contradictory to your other engagements. In such cases, stepping back and asking for an independent party to handle the situation is the right call.

How to Identify a Conflict of Interest
University policy defines a conflict of interest as: "a private, personal or commercial interest of an individual acting under the auspices of the University, that, in the situation at hand, could influence the impartial performance of that individual's University duties/activities."

Conflicts of Interest (Continued)

More simply, a conflict of interest occurs when your other non–representative roles and priorities put you in a position where you cannot fairly advocate for other students as their representative.
For example, a group of students in your cohort have a complaint against a staff member, who happens to be your supervisor. Due to your existing academic relationship with your supervisor, engaging in your representative duties would put you in a difficult position.
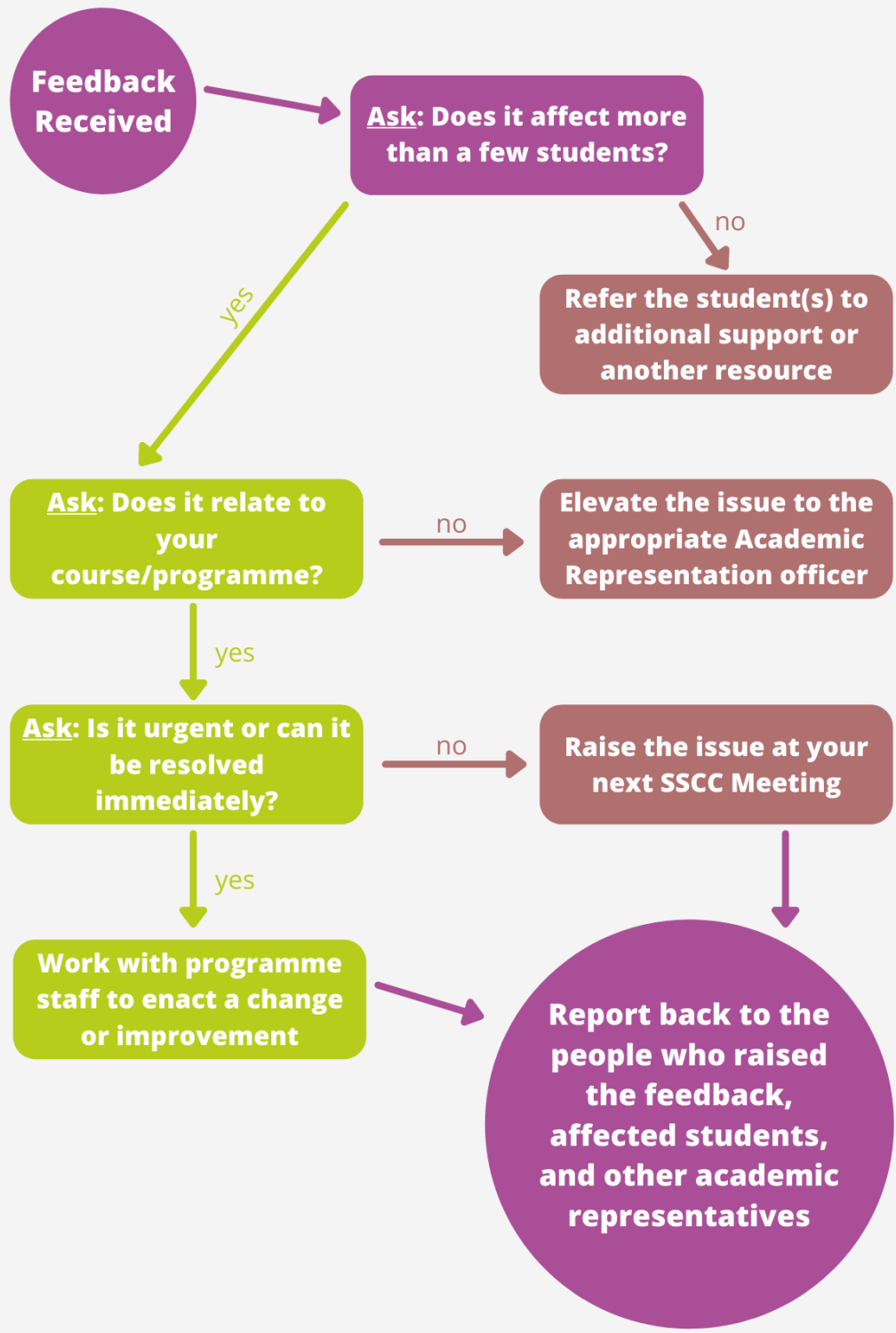
What You Can Do
If you believe you are in a situation where you would have a conflict of interest, you are advised to contact your PGT/PGR President. You can send them an email or arrange a meeting to describe the situation. Your President can then step in temporarily to fulfil some of your representative duties to ensure fairness of process.

Decision Tree

If you aren't sure what to do with feedback a student has brought you, asking yourself this series of questions may help guide you to the right outcome. (Diagram on the following page)

Representative Decision Tree

Feedback Received

Ask: Does it affect more than a few students?

— no → **Refer the student(s) to additional support or another resource**

— yes ↓

Ask: Does it relate to your course/programme?

— no → **Elevate the issue to the appropriate Academic Representation officer**

— yes ↓

Ask: Is it urgent or can it be resolved immediately?

— no → **Raise the issue at your next SSCC Meeting**

— yes ↓

Work with programme staff to enact a change or improvement

Report back to the people who raised the feedback, affected students, and other academic representatives

Reporting Outcomes

The final step in the representation feedback cycle is to communicate back with the students you represent. Reporting outcomes is critical to ensuring that students feel heard and helps keep your peers up to date on the changes that might affect them.

It is also important to discuss the outcomes of your projects with your fellow representatives, including your line-manager, the PGT or PGR President.

Communicating Outcomes to Students

There are two main groups you will want to communicate with as you handle student feedback: the students who submitted the feedback, and the students the changes will affect.

Students Who Submitted Feedback
When you make progress on a problem or opportunity, be sure to go back and update the students who raised the feedback in the first place. Sending them a thank you and telling them what has happened on the issue makes the student feel listened to and encourages them to send feedback again in the future.

Send the student(s) who raised the issue an email, thanking them for what they shared, what you did with it, and what will change because they spoke up. It is also helpful to include a timeline of when the changes might occur, if changes are still ongoing.

Affected Students
If the changes you have worked on are going to affect your peers or a group of your peers, be sure to let them know! Often, the students a change will affect is your entire constituency, so sending a regular email update to your cohort is a good way to inform them of your recent projects.

If the affected student population is broader than just the students you represent, work with your School President, the PGT/PGR President, or a PG Officer as relevant to get the message out.

In your communication, it is best to include a summary of the problem, what has changed and how, and when this change will take place. It is also helpful to give students an avenue to ask questions or encourage them to talk to you if they have more thoughts or feedback.

Sharing Outcomes with PG Reps

Whether you have made progress on an issue or are struggling to move forward, communicating your current priorities with your other representatives invites the opportunity for collaboration and shared success. By bringing an issue to the attention of your fellow representatives, they might discover similar challenges in their own areas or may provide solutions based on their own successes.

A good place to bring up your current projects is at the next PGT or PGR Forum. If you have made progress on a topic that might be relevant to other representatives, or you want to field an issue to other representatives for input, ask to be put on the agenda. The easiest way to do that is to email the PGT or PGR President, telling them a little bit about the issue, and asking to be placed on the next PGT/PGR Forum agenda.

You can also email your PGT/PGR President to ask if other PG Representatives are facing similar challenges to you, or to pass an idea on to another school/programme.

Committees and Meetings

Student–Staff Consultative Committees

What are SSCC Meetings?
'SSCC' stands for Staff–Student Consultative Committee. These meetings usually occur once or twice per semester and last about an hour, though exact dates and the frequency of these meetings vary by School. Schools are encouraged to hold separate SSCCs for taught students (UG Reps and/or PGT Reps) and PGR Reps. (The structure of SSCC meetings in your school may vary).

These meetings offer a space for PG Reps to raise concerns and offer feedback from their cohorts about their course with staff members within their School. They are also an opportunity to work together to find solutions and make improvements.

Who Attends an SSCC?
The exact list of attendees may vary by school, but should typically include:

- **Chair**: School President (or a delegated PGT/PGR Rep)
- **Minutes**: Secretary Class Rep or a member of the School's Admin staff
- All the PGT or PGR Reps affiliated with the School
- In the case of Taught SSCCs, UG Reps will be invited.
- The School's Director of Postgraduate Taught (DoPGT) or Director of Postgraduate Research (DoPGR)
- Other relevant members of staff (e.g. Module Co–Ordinators, Directors of Research Centres)

If you are unable to attend an SSCC, you should ask another PG Rep to present the issues you had planned to raise and send your apologies ahead of the meeting as soon as possible. If you cannot attend, consider reporting your items in advance via email.

Preparation
Before the meeting (approx. 2–3 weeks in advance), PG Reps should collect feedback from the cohorts they represent. Ask the chair of your SSCC meeting for the dates at the beginning of each semester so you have adequate preparation time. See the "Gathering Student Feedback" section for more information on how to collect student opinions. PG Reps then need to decide how to present this feedback with the other PGT or PGR Reps. Issues raised should be relevant to groups of students rather than individual opinions. The meeting chair may wish to create an agenda prior to the SSCC of the issues that will be raised.

Following Up
It is important that you communicate the outcomes of SSCCs with the students you represent through email, social media, Teams, or face-to-face so they know that their voices are being heard. It is also important that actions assigned are followed-up on and progress communicated to the students who provided the feedback. (See the "Reporting Outcomes" Section).

PGT and PGR Forums

What are the PGT and PGR Forums?
These meetings occur approximately twice per semester and last about two hours each. PGT Reps and PGR Reps have separate meetings to deal with issues specific to PGT and PGR students respectively.

These meetings offer a space for PG Reps to raise concerns which affect PGT or PGR students across the University. They are an opportunity to escalate issues which are not solvable at the School level, and to hear about the issues affecting PGTs or PGRs in other Schools.

Who attends PGT and PGR Forums?
The attendees at the PGT/PGR Forums typically include:

- Chair: PGT or PGR President
- Minutes: Academic Representation Intern
- All the PGT or PGR Reps across the University
- Associate Provost (one of the two, as assigned by the Provost)

If you are unable to attend a PGT or PGR Forum, you should ask another PG Rep to present the issues you had planned to raise and send your apologies ahead of the meeting as soon as possible. If you cannot attend, consider reporting your items in advance via email.

Preparation
Prior to the Forum, the PGT or PGR President will put out a call for agenda items (usually 2 weeks in advance). This is your opportunity to raise any of the following items to the attention of your fellow representatives:
- Successful projects you have completed
- Issues that you believe are relevant to other PG representatives
- Issues that you believe need to be elevated (i.e. those you cannot resolve yourself)

PGT and PGR Forums (Continued)

Send a reply, detailing the topic, relevant context for it, what has been done so far, and what stage it is currently at, for the chair to include on the meeting agenda.

You are also responsible for reading over the agenda and the sent materials in advance of the forum. Come prepared to talk about them and provide your ideas.

During the Meeting
The PGT and PGR Forums are meant to be a place for collaboration and discussion for PG Representatives. You are encouraged to participate by speaking on the various agenda items that come up. Here are some suggestions for ways to contribute during the Forum:
- Let your fellow representative(s) know that students in your area are facing a similar issue to the agenda item.
- Present a potential solution that you have thought of or that your School/programme has tried.
- Suggest a way that the agenda item might affect the students you represent.
- Present a perspective that others may not have thought about yet.
- Suggest that a group of representatives meet outside of the forum to discuss an idea/opportunity/issue further.

Always wait to be called on by the Chair of the meeting before speaking during the meeting and remember to work with your peers toward solutions. When the meeting has concluded, stay in contact with your peers and follow up on any projects assigned to you.

After the Meeting
The PGT/PGR President will sometimes escalate issues up to the PG Academic Forum, which handles topics affecting all postgrad students.

The PG Academic Forum is intended to be a space for the PG Representation leadership to discuss issues affecting all postgraduate students with key staff members. Just as the PGT/PGR Forums allow representatives to discuss broader issues, the PG Academic Forum gives the PG Presidents and Officers a place to discuss items with the PG Academic Convenor. The PG Academic Forum is attended by the PGT and PGR Presidents, the PG Officers, the DoEd, and key university administrators (namely the Proctor and Provost). It is chaired by the PG Academic Convenor.

PGT and PGR Representatives are not required to attend the PG Academic Forum. Occasionally, representatives may be invited to these meetings by the Chair, but otherwise are not expected to be in attendance..

Other Resources

<u>Handover</u>

Due to the timing of elections, most outgoing PG Representatives will not be around to do a face–to–face handover with their successors. Instead, Reps fill out a transition document online that will be used to guide the newly elected Reps through their term. Filling out the handover form is a mandatory part of representative duties.

<u>Accessing Your Predecessor's Notes</u>
At the start of your term, the Postgraduate Academic Convenor and the PGT/PGR Presidents will work together to distribute last year's handover form to you. Look for your handover form in the Files Section of the Postgraduate Representatives Channel on Teams. This file will contain information from the rep who was previously in your position on areas like the resources they found helpful, suggested priorities, and barriers they may have faced.

<u>Record Keeping</u>
During your term, taking good notes about the various projects you worked on, challenges you faced, and opportunities that came up will be worthwhile preparation for completing your handover form. Having a record of what came before allows your successor to hit the ground running and gives them context needed to continue where you leave off.

You might want to store your notes electronically, on a resource like OneDrive so that they can easily be passed on. If you want to give your successor access to documents (in addition to the handover form), work with the Postgraduate Academic Convenor or the Academic Representation Co–Ordinator, who can help transfer information between academic years.

<u>Handover Form/Satisfaction Survey</u>
Toward the end of your term, you will be prompted by the Postgraduate Academic Convenor and the PG Presidents to complete your handover form. (PGT Reps usually complete handover in May, while PGR Reps usually complete handover in September).

Handover (Continued)

The purpose of this form is to allow new or incoming reps to know what projects have been worked on, what topics seem reoccurring, and provide information specific to the programme/course/area they are representing. The more detail you provide, the more information your successors will have to work with as they begin their terms as representatives. Additionally, providing honest feedback allows the Students' Association's Representation Team to make improvements and pinpoint areas that are in need of additional support.

The form can be completed in 20-30 minutes and contains a section on satisfaction where you can provide feedback for the Students' Association representation team. This section is designed to improve support for representatives in future years.

If you are around by the time your successor is elected in October, you are encouraged and invited to do a handover meeting with them if you so choose.

Key Contacts

Director of Education | Leonie Malin (Email: doed@st-andrews.ac.uk)

PG Academic Convenor | Caroline McWilliams (Email: pgconven@st-andrews.ac.uk)

PGT President | Ruhi Shukla (Email: pgtpresident@st-andrews.ac.uk)

PGR President | Jessica Haghkerdar (Email: pgrpresident@st-andrews.ac.uk)

PG Part-Time Officer | Milo Zebulun Farragher-Hanks (Email: pgparttime@st-andrews.ac.uk)

PG Distance-Learning Officer | Abideen Abdulkadir (Email: pgdistance@st-andrews.ac.uk)

PG International Officer | Chen Liang (Email: pginterntational@st-andrews.ac.uk)

Academic Representation Co-Ordinator | Chase Greenfield (email: cmg9@st-andrews.ac.uk)

Education Advocate | Iain Cupples (email: helphub@st-andrews.ac.uk)

Glossary of Terms

AMG – Academic Monitoring Group
- A university committee responsible to the Academic Assurance Group for the quality of educational provision and student experience delivered by the University. Attended by the DoEd and PG Academic Convenor.

AU President – Athletics Union President
- The Sabbatical Officer responsible for student sport at the university.

DoEd – Director of Education
- The Sabbatical Officer responsible for matters relating to education, postgraduate studies, and employability.

DoES – Director of Events Services
- The Sabbatical Officer responsible for Union's venues, commercial spaces, and entertainment schedule.

DoPGR – Director of Postgraduate Research
- The academic staff member in a school responsible for PGR matters, programmes, and students.

DoPGT – Director of Postgraduate Teaching
- The academic staff member in a school responsible for PGT matters, programmes, and students.

DoSDA – Director of Student Development and Activities
- The Sabbatical Officer responsible for the Union's activities through societies and subcommittees, as well as extra–curricular development.

DoWell – Director of Wellbeing and Equality
- The Sabbatical Officer responsible for matters relating to welfare, equal opportunities, Saints LGBT+, elections, and Stand Together.

EduCom – Education Committee
- A weekly meeting for the School Presidents to discuss academic affairs and set the Students Association's educational priorities.

LTC – Learning and Teaching Committee
- A university committee responsible, on behalf of the University Senate, for all undergraduate and taught postgraduate academic provision. Attended by the DoEd and PG Academic Convenor.

Glossary of Terms (Continued)

PGR – Postgraduate Research
- Referring to research–based postgraduates in general.

PGRC – Postgraduate Research Committee
- A university committee responsible, on behalf of the university's Academic Senate, for all research postgraduate academic provision. Attended by the DoEd and PG Academic Convenor.

PGT – Postgraduate Taught
- Referring to taught postgraduates in general.

UG – Undergraduate
- Referring to undergraduate students in general.

PG – Postgraduate
- Referring to postgraduate students in general.

PG AC – Postgraduate Academic Convenor
- An elected officer of the Students' Association responsible for the postgraduate representation system. Reports to the DoEd.

SAF – Student Activities Forum
- One of the two Councils of the Students' Association, responsible for leading activities and events.

SP – School President
- Elected undergraduates representatives who are the spokespeople for all students in their respective school.

SRC – Student Representatives Council
- One of the two Councils of the Students' Association, responsible for representative matters.

SSC – Student Services Council
- The former name for the Student Activities Forum (SAF). (This term is no longer used.)

SSCC – Student–Staff Consultative Committee.
- School–level meetings between academic staff and student representatives to discuss issues and potential solutions.

Thank you for reading!