



## **PGT Forum**

St Andrews Students Association

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**Meeting date:** Tuesday 14th October 2025 (16:30-18:00)  
Small Rehearsal Room (Student Union Building)

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### **GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Meeting called by:** PGT President - Pierluigi Maffi

**Type of Meeting:** PGT Forum

**Chair:** PGT President - Pierluigi Maffi

**Note Taker(s):** Rhiannon Cadelle

### **ATTENDANCE**

**Attendees:** PGT President - Pierluigi Maffi, President of Education - Emily Bannister, PGR President - Callum Forbes Irvine, President of Student Opportunities - Robert (RoMo) Moran, Academic Rep Co-ordinator - Amy McLaughlin, Postgraduate Representation Intern - Rhiannon Cadelle, MLitt Marketing RepSTV - Shannon Armstrong, MSc Marine Mammal Science Rep - Shreya Vinodh, MLitt International Political Theory AV Rep - Sydney Dwyer, MSc Computer Science Rep - Muhammad Sarfaraz, Film Studies PGT Rep - Isabella Armus, MLitt Museum and Heritage Studies AV Rep - Angharad Jones, MLitt Global Social and Political Thought AV Rep - Katherine Orr, MLitt Philosophy Rep - Jess Walsh, MSc Entrepreneurship Rep - Sarah Shaefer, MSc Health Data Science AV Rep - Federica Maestri, MLitt International Security Studies AV Rep - Claire Chahbandour, MSc Marine Ecosystem Management Rep - Marc Bonnot, MSc Energy Policy and Finance Rep - Julia Hyman, Statistics PGT Rep - Jack Nowacek, MLitt Gender Studies AV Rep - Meily Denys, MSc Global Sustainable Development AV Rep - Carolyn O'Donnell, TESOL PGT STV Rep (On Campus) - Chayanut Visawakonkal, Neurosciences PGT AV Rep - Bradley Teal, MLitt Divinity Rep - Anastasia Corkery, MSc Banking and Finance Rep STV - Damien Guerra Rodriguez, MLitt International Business STV Rep - Lukas Büser, MSc Environmental Science Rep - Lily Kermitt, MSc Geochemistry Rep AV - Julian Asher, MLitt Management STV Rep - Shahrbanu Ismail, Psychology PGT Rep - Evelin Csabai, MSc Finance Rep - Janhvi Mukherjee, MSc International Education STV Rep - Abigail Shusterman.

**Online:** N/A

**Apologies:** N/A

**Absences:** MLitt Art History Rep - Alida Susan Kruger, MSc Animal Behaviour Rep - Giulia Pipolo, PGT Chemistry Rep - Robert Gabriel Beraru, PGT Classics Rep - Joshua Woodley, Earth Sciences MGeol Rep - Klara Macaulay, MSc Economics Rep - Veronica Semprini, MLitt English Rep - Kaitlyn Mann, History PGT Rep - Gabriel Baker, MLitt Peacebuilding and Mediation AV Rep - Floor Creighton, MLitt Strategic Studies AV Rep - Kyle Tucker, MLitt Terrorism and Political Violence AV Rep - Rachel Dugan, MSc Finance and Management STV Rep - Sierra Kristine Dunbar, MSc Finance and Management STV Rep - Cameron Hamson, MLitt International Business STV Rep - Naomi Gibb, MSc Banking and Finance STV Rep - Gabriel Ricardo Vargas Berroa, Mathematics PGT Rep - Axel Tardelle, Modern Languages PGT Rep - Natalia Karolina Roguz, MSc Astrophysics AV Rep - Charlotte Bosma, TESOL PGT Rep (Distance Learning) STV Rep - Khanh Gia Vo, MSc International Education Rep (Distance Learning) Rep - Hasham Abu Zarifa.

**Guests:** Art and Divinity Faculty President - Maya Fenyk

## **Agenda**

### **I. Welcome and Introduction**

PGT President

Welcome all! Thank you for attending today's PGT Forum. Congratulations on your appointment as PGT Reps for this academic year. Would everyone like to introduce themselves, with your name and representative position.

(Introductions with all attendees stating their name and positions).

### **II. Election Debrief**

Overview of election stats

PGT President - Thank you; it is great to meet you all. For the first item of business, we will defer to the Academic Rep Co-ordinator for an election debrief.

Academic Rep Co-ordinator - Firstly, congratulations on being elected! We have seen good engagement so far from PGT Reps and the PGT community. There were a total of 111 votes for the PGT President. It is hard to get the number of votes for each rep position, however there was a good turn out and we are grateful to the people who voted.

Potential voting/nominations issues

Academic Rep Co-ordinator - We recognise that there were some issues with the elections this year. From next year we will be stepping away from the university system and this should help

us with issues arising on the PGT side. A big issue we had was to do with matriculation, if this was not completed then you were unable to vote - this predominantly affected international students. Hopefully moving away from the university system will omit the issues we encountered this year. However we would like feedback from you all on this year's elections.

Representatives' feedback

(PGT President opens the floor to PGT Reps.)

MSc Energy Policy and Finance Rep - No one I know voted; so I was wondering if there is another way to advertise voting. Only one person ran for my rep position, me, and so it would be nice if there was more awareness around voting and running.

MLitt Global Social and Political Thought AV Rep - It seemed that PGTs only awareness of voting was when I asked if they were running for rep positions and/or if they had voted yet. Would it be possible to advertise earlier, and even include the rep opportunities in the online matriculation materials so PGTs have as much notice as possible, not just a few days to prepare. If we advertise much earlier then we should get more people engaging.

MLitt Museum and Heritage Studies AV Rep - I agree. The time frame for voting was very short, I think that by the time the nominations were extended, the voting period was only a day. This is not enough time, especially with students having university commitments, having a day deadline is not long enough.

MLitt Philosophy Rep - One thing my Director of Studies did was mention the rep position in our course introduction, and so in the end about 3 people applied for the rep position. Again, this is only because it was mentioned in Week 1. This could be something that is implemented for everyone to get maximum engagement.

MSc Global Sustainable Development AV Rep - I agree. The majority of PGTs are newcomers to St Andrews and so are not familiar with the rep system and the deadlines. I made an announcement in one of my classes about me running for the rep position and asking for votes. However before this announcement, students were unaware of the rep opportunity.

PGT President - Thank you. These are all fantastic points and we will definitely have a look at improving these and taking action for next year's elections.

MLitt International Political Theory AV Rep - Another issue students have brought up to me was having the issue of finding the link to vote. We could maybe look at making the elections portal easier to find on the website.

PGT President and Academic Rep Co-ordinator - Thank you all for your contributions.

### **III. PGT Community Initiatives**

## Beacon Bar as a postgraduate space

PGT President - Something we are trying to do, and asking you as reps to help us. We have noticed that St Andrews is great for undergraduates; however for PGTs, who are only here for one year, it is hard to get a community vibe. The undergraduates have a lot of traditions, such as pierwalk and academic families. The lack of PGT community is something I would like to work on this year, building a space for PGs to come together and form a strong relationship across courses. My first action point is turning Beacon Bar into a PG only space once or twice a week. We could host club nights, cocktail nights, pub quizzes, and I am open to more event suggestions. These would only be for PG students. However, in order to do this we need attendance from PGs. So we are asking you as PGT Reps, and we will be asking PGR Reps as well, to try and relay this to your cohorts. This should be a great way to achieve that greater aim of building up the PG community at St Andrews.

## Postgraduate community Instagram page

PGT President - There are some Instagram pages that you should all follow and perhaps notify your cohort so they can follow and keep up with the Union as well. Have a look at @yourunionexec and @stleonardspgs. We will post updates of our actions here. Also follow @sta.eduexec. It is important to see what is going on in the PG community.

## PGT representatives' WhatsApp/Facebook group chat

PGT President - If you all have Whatsapp, I was thinking of creating a group chat with you all so we can chat informally. Important matters can keep to emails or Teams messages, but this would be a space for quicker informal communication. I will send out information after this meeting.

## St Leonards Day celebration

PGT President - St Leonards Day is on November 6th, we are hoping to have a big celebration all together as part of the St Leonards community. I am chatting with the Old Burgh School and working with them to create a nice event, perhaps a pierwalk or a bonfire.

## Volunteering

PGT President - Next on the agenda is PG Volunteering, so I will defer to the President of Student Opportunities for volunteering opportunities.

President of Student Opportunities - Thank you so much for your work so far. Over the years there has been increasing engagement with the volunteering portal and these hours have been recognised by the Union and the University. Over the summer we discussed how we can recognise PGT volunteering. The current system dictating the amount of hours expected for the 4 year undergraduate degrees, has been reworked for the postgraduates to reflect your one

year degree. I will circulate a link after the meeting with the minutes so you can sign up to the portal. Everything you do such as work in a society, student support role (such as this rep position), all counts. There are different levels you can achieve and this will go on your HEAR transcript. I believe that once you achieve Diamond (highest level) you are provided with letters of recommendation.

MLitt Divinity Rep - To confirm, is this volunteering that we initiate ourselves or are we signing up to and complete preexisting volunteering opportunities? And also when I clicked on this link it took me to the Careers homepage.

President of Student Opportunities - Firstly there will be a better link that I will send out, this will include a guide to navigating the portal. We have also improved how long it takes to approve hours, you should hear back in a couple of days. If you sign up, then this is the place to record your hours, so tell us what volunteering you have done for this. For example, this meeting is 90 minutes of volunteering already.

Academic Rep Co-ordinator - If there are volunteering opportunities that are not on the portal we will suggest this to you. But the portal is mainly for rep stuff, societies, etc.

President of Education - So you all should have about 4 hours of volunteering as of today; this includes your training. So that can be logged.

PGT President - Are there any questions or ideas for the future, on how to make a better PGT community, any feedback in general?

MSc Global Sustainable Development AV Rep - I have some feedback regarding PG socials. My peers came up to me, knowing that I was the Rep, with the idea of PG socials. They expressed it was difficult to meet postgraduates specifically in socials and society functions. So, I think it is a good idea to have more PG-only socials to build up the community.

PGT President - It is great that everyone recognises this as a problem, and we will need a lot of help from you all in order to get started on building up the PG community. I am as new as you guys, I am new to St Andrews so I am relying on your communication of these issues, you relay of ideas to help improve the PG community.

MLitt Global Social and Political Thought AV Rep - I was talking to people in my program and they brought up the issue of PG students, who are not planning on doing a PhD and instead would like to join the work force, not having enough career support. There should be more support in the Careers centre in applying to research positions, career based events such as PG career fairs and PG careers assistance where they are more aware of our qualifications and how best to apply for jobs open to us - they seem more focused on getting undergraduates into the workforce and do not seem to know enough about opportunities PGs can apply for. This events would even be good for PhD students, staying in academia.

MLitt International Political Theory AV Rep - There are fewer opportunities for PGs to get involved, such as in rep positions, in clubs and societies - which are more undergraduate dominated. I have had PG students express the wish for more opportunities to get involved in the University community beyond rep positions.

PGT President - I think some societies have PG positions within their society committees, however because we are only here for a year this poses a difficulty.

President of Student Opportunities - This is a concern that we were thinking about over the summer, and is definitely something to explore further. I am wondering if the PGR President has any ideas as he has had more experience.

PGR President - This is an issue that has gone on for years. The timing for the annual meeting for societies is before the PG courses start date. So one idea would be to have the PG position on the committees have elections in September. This will open societies to PGs and we can see more PGT and PGR students on society committees.

MLitt Divinity Rep - I would like to note that I love planning fun socials and mixer events; I have a lot of ideas so if you would like inspiration please contact me. I think we could possibly do a scavenger hunt as PGs are not so familiar with St Andrews yet. We can make fun posters and put them everywhere - visuals are better than emails. No sign ups in advance - students will not come. We can mix up teams so people get to know new people. I have had feedback within my School that there is not always the chance to mix with other Schools, so it would be nice to have this interdisciplinary connection through these events.

PGT President - This is where you guys come into play. We need to collaborate so that everyone knows about events.

MSc Entrepreneurship Rep - We are starting Entrepreneur Society, elections will be held in November. Students are welcome from across Schools, this is not for just Business School students. Please reach out to me if you are interested.

PGR President - I want to add that the visual posters are a great idea. The Old Burgh School is quite clerical with its white walls so posters to brighten up the place are definitely needed. PG Reps are central to this, making PG spaces more welcoming, colourful and vibrant.

MLitt Gender Studies AV Rep - Gender Studies is an interdisciplinary course and has a lot of messy grey areas, and it seems that careers centre was unclear about interdisciplinary courses and the jobs available - this was particularly the case for the MLitt Gender Studies.

PGT President - This is definitely something we can bring up, and make sure the Careers Centre are aware that this is an issue.

President of Student Engagement - We have a meeting coming up with the Careers Centre so we can bring this up.

#### **IV. SSCCs Meetings and Students' Feedback**

Overview of representatives' roles, Advice on collecting feedback and implementing changes, Students' questionnaires design • Discussion

President of Education - Apologies for the brain dump, please stop me if you have any questions. You have two core parts of your job as a rep: the first is gathering student feedback, and the second is presenting student feedback. There are University policies for gathering and presenting student feedback. One way to present feedback is through the SSCCs. These were mentioned during your training but if you have any specific questions, please ask them at the end. In the next few weeks you should make a feedback form and gather feedback from your cohort, use the question bank we have provided. The question bank has been designed to standardise feedback and you have a space to tailor it to your cohorts interests and your rep aims for the year, you have 4 questions for this. Collaborate with your Director of Postgraduate Taught Teaching to make these questions. Make the form with Quantrics or Microsoft Forms. Publicise the forms by any means you wish: a social media post, in a group chat. Have a look at the feedback and see if there are common issues that can be the main themes to present at your SSCCs. When organising your SSCCs, consider whether your program is more taught or research based. You can hold your own SSCCs, but we recommend that you join with the undergraduate School President or the PGR Rep so you can both advocate for issues that similarly affect your students. You can determine which is better suited by the issues you are presented with, for example lecture capture is more likely an issue shared with undergraduates, whether as building a PG community is better in a PG SSCC. Which one you should attend will be determined by your feedback and your aims, so reach out to the relevant School President or PGR Rep to set a date for these meetings.

MLitt Gender Studies AV Rep - There was a SSCC for Interdisciplinary Studies scheduled without us for tomorrow and so we cannot make it. It seems that the staff members have planned it.

President of Education - Can anyone attend this meeting? (Several "Yes" from Interdisciplinary Reps) My recommendation is to attend the meeting with the stipulation that there will be another

PGR President - I recommend that you go in with anecdotal feedback. You can gather this from your inductions, first few classes, how PGs are navigating St Andrews. Then in the SSCC later in this semester you can present evidence. But anecdotal evidence is still evidence!

MLitt Divinity Rep - Just to clarify, based on whether your feedback fits more with the undergraduate or postgraduate SSCC is the meeting we go to?

President of Education - Yes, so there are undergraduate reps called School Presidents and PGR Reps. You can hold your own SSCC but we recommend you join one of theirs to save the administration burden and also having more student support in these meetings.

PGR President - PGT is a hybrid because it is both undergraduate with its teaching but is also more like PGR with its independent research so you need to decide what the best fit is for your course and the matters that you are addressing during your time as Rep.

President of Education - If you do not have undergraduate modules on your course or do not have a PGR cohort, reach out to your school administrator and Director of Postgraduate Teaching.

PGT President - Reminder that Academic Rep Co-ordinator has uploaded SSCC information documents on the Teams Channel for you to consult. If you have questions that come to you after this meeting please feel free to contact us.

## **V. Representatives' Issues and Advice**

Discussion of potential issues in various courses, possible solutions and shared advice

PGT President - Are there any issues that have arisen so far with courses, professors, advice that anyone would like to give?

MSc Global Sustainable Development AV Rep - There is a vague issue specifically for Global Sustainability students. Our dissertation is not mandatory but a lot of students are opting to do it. Undergraduates start their dissertation in January/February, however lots of PGs would like information before this, for example: when will I be assigned a dissertation supervisor, how to find a research topic. This tools are not easy to find

PGT President - I have had the same experience. I feel this is a university wide issue; try to converse with your professors and this is definitely an agenda point for the SSCCs.

MSc Global Sustainable Development AV Rep - The issue for my degree specifically is that only one professor has the dissertation information, and its hard to find out who this one professor is.

MSc Banking and Finance Rep STV - For my degree, which is part of the Business School, there is a dissertation writing class - is this shared across schools? Julia Brookes is the convenor, and I could speak to her to see whether other cohorts could attend, there is usually plenty of space for more students.

PGT President - Whilst this is a great idea, it is not just our decision to make but the University's as well. This is an issue to perhaps raise with the AVP Dean of Teaching and Learning, standardising dissertation information to be distributed earlier on in the academic year. To

summarise, it is not our place to take action on this but to broach the subject with relevant University Leadership. Thank you for your contributions.

Academic Rep Co-ordinator - ELLI and the Career Centre do have general dissertation guidance, and you can request a meeting regardless of your course for general advice.

MLitt Museum and Heritage Studies AV Rep - I know a lot of students do not know who to turn to and who to ask. Due to the interdisciplinary nature of our course, they did not know where they fit in with and who to talk to. I know this can be part of the feedback for SSCCs but does anyone have any advice or similar issues?

PGR President - Museum and Heritage Studies sit in the Graduate School? This means that you can give feedback directly to your course coordinator and to the Graduate School for broader concerns. We can ask for clarification of who is in charge for your course if that would be of help.

MLitt Philosophy Rep - I spoke to my Director about scheduling a SSCC and he mentioned that he would like to work on a coursebook for the dissertation to provide more clarification. This could perhaps be an agenda point for other SSCCs?

President of Education - I think this is something you should add. Most undergraduate degrees have dissertation handbooks, so it would be valuable to push for a similar resource for PGTs in your SSCCs. Each School tends to run a "How to Dissertation" for the undergraduate students, which takes place in September. You could also ask if this could be extended to PGTs and occur later in the year, perhaps at the end of Semester One so this is a resource that the current PGTs can have access to.

MLitt Philosophy Rep - To confirm the Philosophy dissertation handbook and session is planned for November.

MLitt Global Social and Political Thought AV Rep - This point is interdisciplinary specific. PGs can take modules in other colleges if they would like, however spot management changes have meant that students who thought they were taking a module next semester - and this was confirmed during their advising - are now being told that they cannot take that module and instead have to take whatever is available. Students are then taking modules that do not align with their research interests and only find this out several weeks into the semester.

PGT President - I understand, my course has a similar mechanism. This seems like a School issue, so speak to the School President about student feedback and your Director of Postgraduate Teaching. This is something to discuss at your SSCCs also.

PGR President - Definitely, there is an issue with the module allocation influx, so chat with you Director of Postgraduate Teaching to see if there is a way to make the process less messy. There may not be a solution as there are several contributing factors to modules not running,

such as staff gaining funding and going on research leave but have a conversation with your School to see if there is something to make the system more dependable for PGTs.

PGT President - I agree, have a discussion but as students there is not much we can do beyond giving feedback and hoping that we have provided persuasive evidence for them to take action.

MSc Banking and Finance Rep STV - I will say with regards to the dissertation class for the Business School, the convenor Juila is very involved with working with Reps. We have already had our SSCC and our next is planned for November 20th. If people are interested in auditing the dissertation class, I can put this on the agenda about the demand for auditing - so please reach out to me if you are interested.

## **VI. Any Other Business**

President of Education - You may have seen the post on Teams about the Education Forum. It will happen this Thursday, 5:30pm-7:00pm in the Large Researsal Room in the Students' Association. All academic reps, students (undergraduate and postgraduate), everyone is welcome. I have put a Microsoft Form on Teams for agenda points. Please attend!

PGT President - Yes, please come on Thursday! Our next meeting will be in November, after everyone's SSCCs. We can convene and discuss what are the main problems at University level. I look forward to having a good and productive year. Thank you all for your time!