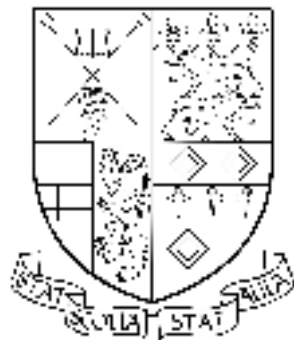


PG Rep Handbook 2018/19

**A GUIDE TO ACADEMIC
REPRESENTATION**



University of St Andrews
Students' Association

Congratulations!

You have been elected to be a Postgraduate Rep and represent your cohort to your School and the wider University. As PG reps you are the foundation to everything that we do in the Students' Association to support learning, teaching & research across the University. We are very excited about the work ahead of us and the ambitions that students have to make the student learning & researching experience here the best one we can receive.

We hope this training will help you with your role and that it will allow you to make the most out of your Postgraduate Rep experience.

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What you'll find inside

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Wait, where do I start?

This role is yours, and we want to make sure that you can get the most out of it as possible. Here's a quick checklist for where you can start:

- Have you attended the PG Rep training?
- Have you met with your School President and the other PG Reps in your School?
- Have you met with your Director of Teaching and/or your Director of PG Studies? PGTs - and the relevant module coordinator(s) for the modules you represent to ask about National Student Survey (NSS) data and previous module feedback?
- Have you joined the 'St Andrews Class Reps 2018-19' and the 'St Andrews PG Reps 2018-19' Facebook groups?
- Have you signed up for the 'expansion pack' trainings for the Library, Social, and Secretary, as relevant to your role?
- Do you know the dates for your (PG) Student-Staff Consultative Committees (SSCCs) this year? What about the PG Exec Forums?
- Have you come up with a plan for how you can implement the goals you set at the training?
- Do you know where you can get support if you feel stuck or don't know what to do?
- Have you seen the minutes from the last SSCC meeting?

**What are your motivations for being a
PG Rep?**

You're adding on to 600 years of history

Student engagement has been an integral part of the learning experience in Scottish higher education. From the ambitions of the 'democratic intellect', Scottish Universities have maintained an innately democratic nature in the way they run - especially when it comes to learning and teaching.

We don't run elections simply because they're a bunch of fun. By being an elected officer, you carry a **democratic mandate** to pursue certain objectives and adopt certain tactics in reaching those goals.

This is the fourth year that we have a **standardised system of postgraduate reps**, both taught and research, across all Schools. We are very excited to enhance the postgraduate experience through appropriate representation on all levels and get postgraduate input on academic issues. **No decision should be made without student input, and that's where you come in.**

We're here to support you and every rep in making the student learning & researching experience at St Andrews the best it can be. Reps are essential to this project: **you are the experts in the field** with the first-hand knowledge to see how the University's decisions are making an impact on students. You have the knowledge, but this guide should help with giving you the skills.

Here's how it works

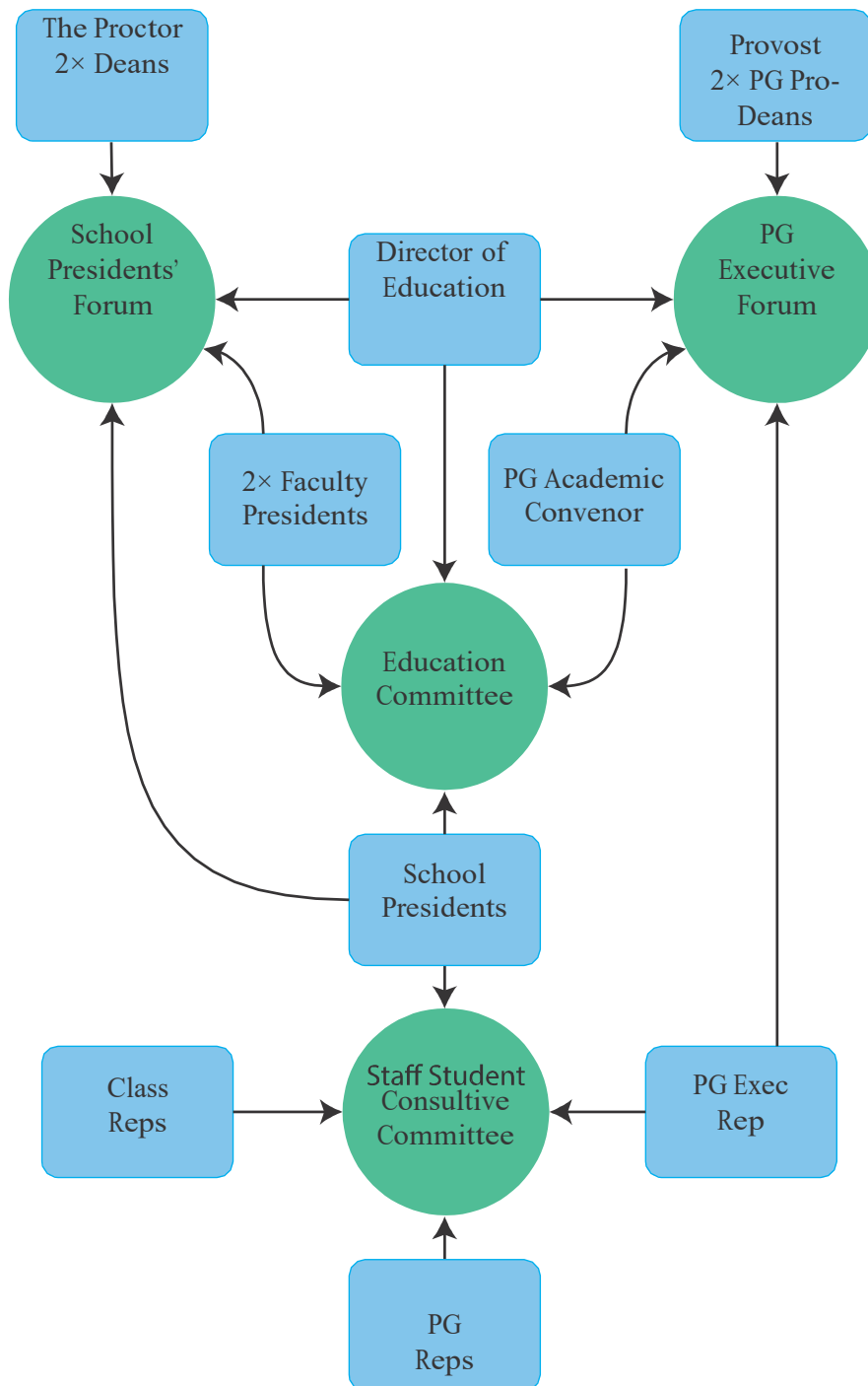
PG Reps contribute feedback and student opinion on the quality of teaching in their School at regular **Student–Staff Consultative Committees** (SSCCs). They meet once or twice each semester and will include PG and Class Reps, the School President, and the relevant academic staff. The School President will chair and convene the meeting and will distribute the agenda out to everyone. Some Schools might have specific Postgraduate SSCCs (PSSCC) that are chaired and convened by the **Postgraduate Executive Rep**.

Before the SSCC meeting, your School President will organise a **Class Rep Forum** to discuss the issues that they want to bring up at the meeting and brief the PG and Class Reps on the running issues within the School. At these meetings, feel free to bring up anything that you feel is relevant for the SSCC meetings.

After the meeting, you may again meet with the other PG and Class Reps to debrief. Here, you'll settle actions to be taken in advance of the next SSCC meeting to make progress on the various points you want to pursue over the year.

Every School also has its own **Learning & Teaching Committee** (LTC) where any issues with regard to that are discussed by members of staff in attendance of the School President. Depending on the size of your School and the committee, you might be able to attend LTC as well. If that's not the case, make sure you let your School President know about any issues you would like to have brought up.

Academic Representation Structure



Where else are people talking about this?

There's a large number of elected student representatives and a part-time member of staff of the Students' Association who contribute to the system of academic representation.

The **Postgraduate Academic Convenor** (Ashley Clayton, pgconvenor@) is responsible for postgraduate reps and convenes the Postgraduate Executive Forum to discuss current issues with relevant University staff. The Postgraduate Academic Convenor is your first point of contact if you need more support in your School or have issues that need to be discussed across the University. He sits on all relevant University committees (e.g. Academic Council, Learning & Teaching Committee, and Postgraduate Research Committee) and the Students' Representative Council (SRC).

The **Director of Education** (Alice, doed@) is the full-time sabbatical officer who takes the lead on everything related to education and is the key support officer for every School President. She is taking a year out of her studies between third and fourth year to serve in this position for a full year after being elected in March. She also leads the Students' Association's work on student employability and PG studies.

The **Students' Representative Council (SRC)** is the legally constituted voice of St Andrews students. The two Faculty Presidents sit on SRC to represent the **Education Committee**, which is composed of all 23 School Presidents, 2 Faculty Presidents, the Postgraduate Academic Convenor, and the Director of Education.

Postgraduate Development Officer

Courtney Aitken | pgdevo@

Courtney was elected by the PG student body to liaise with all services that relate to non-academic and non-social parts of PG students' lives, such as CAPOD, Registry, and Student Services.

Faculty Presidents

Arts and Divinity | Gianluca Giammei | artdivfp@

Science & Medicine | Alisa Danilenko | scimedfp@

The Faculty Presidents (FPs) are responsible for representing students in their respective faculties. They will work closely with you on different projects over the year. They were both School Presidents last year and can give you valuable advice and support, and point you in the right direction if you get stuck. The FPs also sit on the Academic Council, the official University body responsible for all learning & teaching policies.

Employability Fund

For information on the employability fund, and how it can help you put on events in your school, please contact the DoEd (doed@) or the DoSDA (dosda@).

Postgraduate Executive Forum

While School Presidents are elected in March of the preceding academic year, both undergraduate and postgraduate reps are elected during the first weeks of the new academic year. As well as meeting in Schools, there are four annual meetings of the Postgraduate Executive Forum, which meets with senior university management and is chaired by the Postgraduate Academic Convenor. Two are for Taught Postgraduates and two are for Research Postgraduates. The **PG Executive Forum** dates will be released by the Academic Convenor.

Funding

The Students' Association maintains the **Education Discretionary Fund** for School Presidents and PG Reps to finance projects and initiatives related to enhancing learning & teaching. You can apply for the funding through your School President to help finance your projects. We can cover catering for events, speaker fees, newsletter printing, etc.; bear in mind, however, that the fund cannot be used to buy alcohol. Read the guidelines carefully on the relevant section of the yourunion.net website.

Enhancement Themes Funding

Funding available for evidence based initiatives through the Enhancement Themes

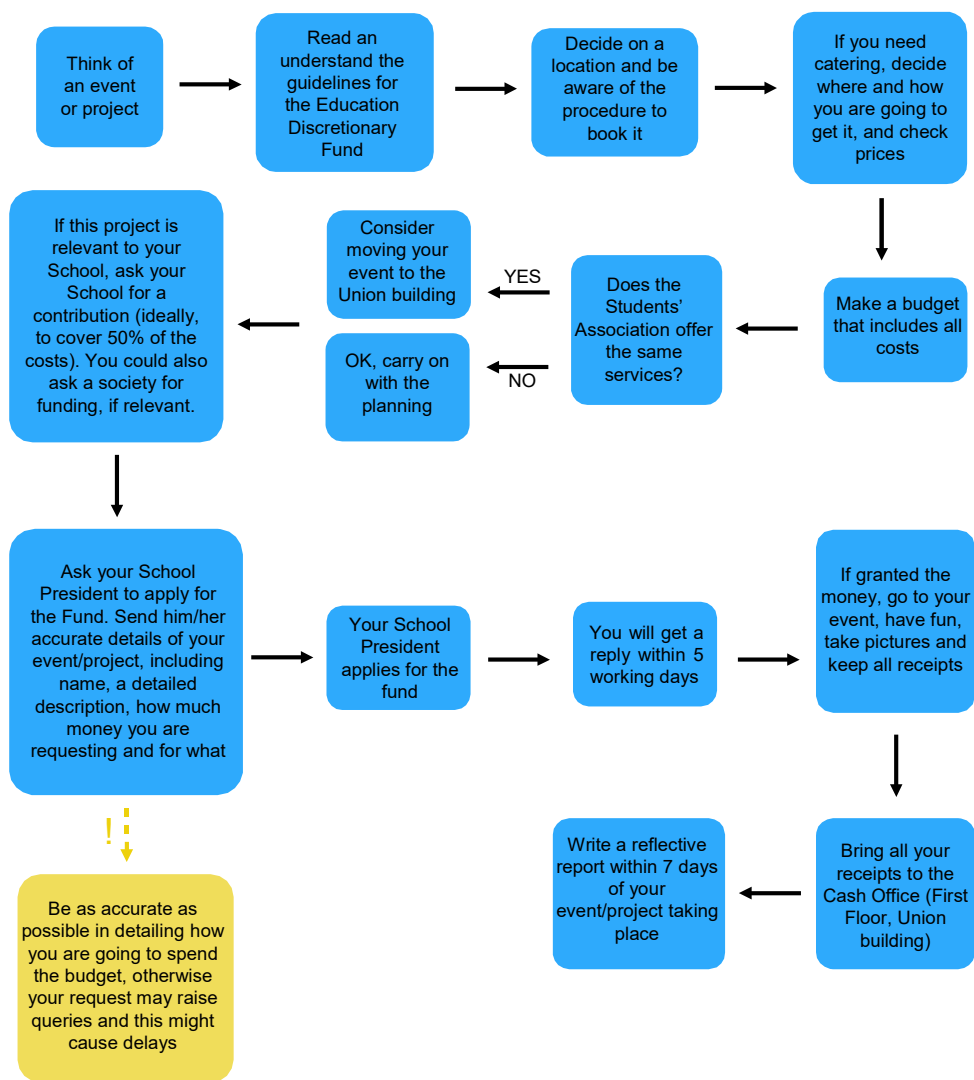
Evidence based on qualitative and quantitative data can be used to help improve the student experience here at University. Do you have an idea for an event, project or resource that revolves around using evidence? If so, **up to £1,000** of Enhancement Theme funding may be available to you. For further information, please visit the [Enhancement Theme Funding Scheme](#) web page or contact enhancementtheme@st-andrews.ac.uk.

Event Planning

How to plan an event/project and apply for the Education Discretionary Fund



A guide for Class Reps
Any questions get in touch doed@



Use this space to take notes on an event you want to plan

What if the problem is about something beyond my School?

PG Reps might want to change something that affects them and the other students in their modules, but sometimes the response from the teaching staff will be ‘it’s not something that’s set by us!’ In those cases, talk to your School President and have them bring up the issue with the Students’ Association, or contact the Director of Education (doed@), or Postgraduate Academic Convenor (pgconvenor@). Pan-Postgraduate issues are ideal items for the agenda of the Postgraduate Executive Forum.

The **Students’ Association** operates autonomously from the University and is an **independent charity** here to support students. We interact on a regular basis with the University to continually enhance teaching quality and to maintain the standards of teaching throughout every subject and discipline. We also liaise with the various units of the University: the Library, IT Services, CAPOD, Student Services, and the Careers Centre are a few key examples!

If you ever need support for a project that requires some work beyond just the School level, don’t give up on the issue—let us know about it in the Students’ Association, and we’ll lend all the support we can to making your issue heard and understood by the University.

You represent diverse student population from a wide range of backgrounds.

The importance of being a PG Rep is that you're working to represent the wide range of opinions felt by all of your classmates. There are a number of things to consider regarding diversity in this respect:

- **Nationality & ethnicity.** Does the material seem understandable both to a British and an international student?
- **Ability.** Do you know what students with disabilities think about the quality of teaching in your modules? Do they feel like the School is meeting their needs?
- **Age.** Are there any mature students in your modules?
- **Living situation.** Do you know how many commuting students there are in your class? How many students in your classes have families or caring obligations?
- **Learning style.** How many students feel like they learn more from an exam than from an essay? How many students would call themselves auditory versus visual learners?

Taking the extra step to ensure that your opinion is representative to a wide range of students helps to more strongly prove your point and make a more effective case to the teaching staff.

Remember that it's your job to represent the views of your fellow students, even when you don't personally agree with them. If a number of students have an issue, try to find out why, and whether this is something that can be improved.

Use evidence to show why change matters

One thing that we stress for PG Reps is that they are making arguments that are backed up with evidence. Being able to present evidence helps to make a case for changing something while inherently carrying the weight of being a representative opinion.

This is why collecting feedback from students is an essential skill for PG Reps to have.

Surveys. A key survey that you can get from your School is the most recent PTES/PRES results from last year. That'll be a good place to start for the year in talking through those numbers. You can also make your own, for example on the situation of tutor training and pay.

Social media groups. If you have a Facebook group oriented towards your subject, you can easily work to get individual feedback from your fellow students online.

Office hours. You can hold a regular office hour that you publicise amongst your fellow students to let them come along and talk about any issues with you.

Emails. Ask your School President for help if you want to send emails to a specific postgraduate cohort within your department. Your School President has emailing rights to all postgraduate students.

What have previous rep done?

Surveys. On the situation of PhD students who teach with regard to training and pay.

Academic events. You could run postgraduate research seminars where current Master and PhD students are invited to speak about their research and learn from each other. You could set up writing groups and dissertation support groups. Or you can go even bigger and organise a postgraduate conference in your School.

Careers events. Always a hot topic among postgrads and the big question of academic or non-academic careers. Organise an employability event and get in touch with Ben Carter (boc@) at the Careers Centre who will be happy to support you.

Social events. You can start small by organising coffee mornings, lunch breaks or pub socials for your cohort or mixer events for Masters and PhD students. You can go big and organise a Christmas party, a Burns supper evening or an Away Day trip to The Burn for postgrads in your School.

Confidentiality and anonymity

Whenever you are collecting feedback, especially if it's qualitative feedback, do your best to ensure that when you take that feedback onwards to the next step as a PG Rep, you're anonymising the data you have. Instead of specifying a student with their name, just say what year they are in and what they said to you. You can still make your point while preserving anonymity.

What else is out there?

Beyond working with your School President, teaching staff, and classmates, there is more that a Class Rep can contribute to. You can help influence the services that the Library, the Careers Centre, CAPOD, and other units provided by the University.

You can get extra training, too!

Specifically for PG and Class Reps, we offer 'Expansion Packs' to train you on how to work on issues that may be of particular interest for you. This year, we are running sessions on building a social community, running careers events, working with the Library, and taking minutes at SSCC meetings.

Library and Learning Resources training

Building a Social Community training

Secretary training

Dates for all of the above training sessions will be communicated to yourselves once they have been confirmed

You can also learn more about other professional and transferable skills from CAPOD through the Professional Skills Curriculum.

Other Useful Contacts

CAPOD

CAPOD is the Centre for Academic, Professional and Organisational Development. **Cat Wilson (cat.wilson@)** will be your primary contact in CAPOD because she is the head of student development and can help you with developing skills of students in your School.

Careers Centre

School Presidents are expected to liaise with the Careers Centre and organise guest speakers (maybe even alumni from your own School) to come and discuss employment options with current students in your School.

Pam Andrew (pea1@) is the Employability Coordinator in the Careers Centre and should be your first point of contact. She can point you to a specific advisor responsible for your School.

Library

Each School has a designated **Academic Liaison Librarian** within the University Library staff. They are a great point of contact for answering questions about School-specific learning resources and reading lists, and can also organise a talk about making the most out of the University Library for your students.

Vicki Cormie (vhc1@) and **Hilda McNae (hmm9@)** are the two Senior Academic Liaison Librarians and you should invite them to your SSCC meetings.

Student Services

If students are having personal issues, difficulties at home, are seriously unwell or having financial problems, they should contact Student Services or the ASC on **theasc@**. They have trained members of staff who can help to ensure that their academic grades do not suffer.

Please encourage students to contact Student Services as soon as possible if they are facing any problems.

Proctor's Award

Class Reps (and School Presidents) can be nominated for the Proctor's Award for the extraordinary work they do in supporting the development of learning and teaching in St Andrews. Find more information on the Students' Association website.

Class Reps Awards

There are also two types of awards specifically for Class Reps:

- School Class Representative of the Year (one in each School)
- Students' Association Class Representative of the Year (one award overall)

Selection of the School Class

Representative of the Year

Representatives can send in an application for the School Class Representative of the Year Award. To do so, they should write a 300-word statement explaining why they believe they are worthy of being receiving the award. The School President will also send a recommendation for the most committed class rep in the School. For the final decision, we will take into consideration both the statement and the recommendation.

This is to reward excellence in academic representation. The School President is not obliged to make a recommendation if they think that no class rep in the School deserves the award.

Selection of the Students' Association Class Representative of the Year

The selected School Class Representatives of the Year will form the longlist for this award. The Faculty Presidents and the Director of Education will shortlist 5 candidates. A judging panel made by the Director of Education, the FPs, and the PG Academic Convenor will choose the winner.

Some words of advice.

“Plan ahead and enjoy! For all that the role might seem demanding at times, it's also incredibly rewarding.”

“Make sure you use the help of the other students, the events are all for their benefit and they are normally more than happy to help.”

“Be persistent, chat with your course mates, and keep fighting the good fight.” “Make sure you are not afraid to say ‘no’ to things.”

Anything else?

If there's something we missed, or if you have any more questions throughout your time as a Postgraduate Rep, feel free to contact the Postgraduate Academic Convenor at any time! Good luck and enjoy!

University of St Andrews Students' Association
St Mary's Place
St Andrews
Fife
KY16 9UZ



Class Rep Directory:
yourunion.net/classreps

Your School President:
yourunion.net/schoolpresidents

Your Academic Library Liaison:
www.st-andrews.ac.uk/library/contact/academicliaison/

Your Director of Postgraduate Studies and Postgraduate Secretary:
www.st-andrews.ac.uk/schools/contacts/dopg/

Your Director of Teaching:
www.st-andrews.ac.uk/schools/contacts/dot/

St Leonards' College:
www.st-andrews.ac.uk/pgstudents/stleonards/

The University of St Andrews Students' Association's origins date back to 1880s and has been constantly dedicated to supporting the student experience and fostering a positive and inclusive community amongst the students of the University.

The University of St Andrews Students' Association is a charity registered in Scotland, No. SCO19883.
