



Postgraduate Researcher Student Representatives Policy

1. Introduction and Purpose

- 1.1. The University of Manchester is committed to receiving and responding to postgraduate research student feedback in order to bring about improvements to the quality of the postgraduate research experience and to provide appropriate opportunities for postgraduate research students to contribute to the formulation and development of policy.
- 1.2. This document provides information on policy issues at the University of Manchester in relation to the representation of postgraduate research students throughout their programme of study. Procedural issues are covered in the University of Manchester procedures document relating to postgraduate research student representation.
- 1.3. Every programme, School and Faculty should have postgraduate research representatives and this policy applies to those representatives.
- 1.4. In addition to programme, School and Faculty based representatives; the University of Manchester Students' Union (UMSU) elects Faculty PGR representatives each year. Details of the UMSU policies and process in relation to postgraduate research representatives is available on the [UMSU 'Rep Hub'](#). This policy forms part of the [University's Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Degrees](#).
- 1.5. Student representation for postgraduate research students provides a means by which the postgraduate research community is represented in formal University structures and through which postgraduate research students can raise any issues and concerns and communicate their opinions and thoughts on their student experience to relevant staff.
- 1.6. It also provides an opportunity for postgraduate research students to contribute to the formulation and development of postgraduate research policy, ensuring that the postgraduate research student perspective is taken into account.

2. Scope and Definitions

- 2.1. This policy applies to all doctoral (including professional doctorates) and master's level postgraduate research degrees at the University of Manchester. The policy does not apply to Master of Research (MRes) or any other postgraduate taught degree programmes.
- 2.2. This policy is intended for use by academic and administrative staff and all postgraduate research students. It provides a framework for defining the requirements for postgraduate research student representation, whilst recognising that local practice may vary according to discipline at programme, School and Faculty level.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

The main responsibilities of the postgraduate research student representative are:

- To attend relevant committee meetings/appropriate fora where required in order to communicate key feedback and any issues/concerns from the postgraduate research student cohort or area of representation.
- To attend the unreserved business section of the agenda and to be aware that they cannot attend for reserved business which would normally deal with individual student matters¹.
- To arrange for an alternative representative to attend meetings if they are unable to attend in person.
- To attend all relevant training and briefing sessions on postgraduate research student representation.
- To put in place mechanisms to consult postgraduate research students and gather postgraduate research student feedback, issues and concerns.
- To provide regular and timely feedback to the postgraduate research student body.
- To contribute to the development of postgraduate research student policy, where appropriate.
- To provide a means of bringing together the relevant postgraduate research student body, where appropriate with support from the School/Faculty or Doctoral Training Centre.
- To participate in School events such as Open Days and Induction.
- To signpost to relevant support services.

Postgraduate research student representatives are expected to fully commit to the responsibilities of the role as outlined and be engaged and active in their roles.

The main responsibilities of the **School/Discipline/Area contact** are:

- To ensure that a fair and transparent process is in place to appoint the relevant student representatives by the timelines specified in the procedures document.
- To give adequate notice of meetings. The relevant Chair/Secretary should be made aware of the need to have the postgraduate research student in mind when preparing the agenda and should take time to ensure that the postgraduate research student is given the opportunity to contribute to the discussion.
- To provide details of postgraduate research student representatives to the Research Degrees and Researcher Development Team in the Directorate for Research and Business Engagement by the timelines specified in the procedures document.
- To ensure that adequate facilities are in place for communication of information to the relevant student body (physical or other as appropriate).

¹ In exceptional circumstances the Chair may request that other issues are added to this section of the agenda.

The main responsibilities of the **Students' Union** are:

- To provide all student representatives with information on services provided by the Students' Union, covering its unique representation and advocacy roles.
- To provide information about the ways in which elected representatives within the Students' Union are able to raise issues at University level.

4. General Principles

- 4.1. The implementation of this policy can be varied according to the individual needs of programmes, Doctoral Training Centres, Schools, Faculties, and their student profile, whilst continuing to share best practice. The following principles **MUST** be met when formulating their policy.
- 4.2. There should be regular meetings at which opportunities are offered for meaningful discussion between postgraduate research student representatives and academic and/or administrative staff normally at the following levels across the University – Programme/Discipline, School, Faculty, Doctoral Training Centre, and University.
- 4.3. In establishing appropriate student representation, consideration must be given to the size and scope of the postgraduate research student body to ensure that the postgraduate research student representatives can undertake their role effectively.
- 4.4. All postgraduate research students should be informed during induction and in appropriate handbooks and/or other information about how postgraduate research student representation works. The information provided should include details about opportunities for students to contribute to and to enhance their experience in a timely way by acting as a postgraduate research student representative to represent their defined cohort.
- 4.5. There should be a fair and transparent process by which postgraduate research student representatives are appointed. Whilst recognising that formal elections may not always be the most appropriate means by which postgraduate research student representatives are chosen.
- 4.6. Programmes/Doctoral Training Centres/Schools/Faculties should ensure that appropriate arrangements for selection are in place and a full list of all representatives should be submitted to the Research Degrees and Researcher Development Team in the Directorate for Research and Business Engagement by the timelines specified in the procedures document.
- 4.7. Postgraduate research student representatives should always be invited to relevant meetings and other appropriate fora. If they are unable to attend a particular meeting they should be invited to send an alternative representative and they should have an opportunity to provide comments prior to the meeting on relevant item(s) on the agenda.
- 4.8. All postgraduate research students should be made aware of their relevant postgraduate student representative(s) and of how they can be contacted.
- 4.9. Faculties/Schools and Doctoral Training Centres should nominate a member of staff (academic or administrative) to act as a first point of contact for support on representation issues and to co-ordinate postgraduate research student representation within the area.
- 4.10. Training for new academics and supervisor awareness training should include reference to this policy.

Version amendment history		
Version	Date	Reason for change
1	July 2010	N/A
2	June 2019	Updates. New format. Creation of related procedure document.

Document control box	
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Related Statutes, Ordinances, General Regulations:	University's Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Degrees
Related policies/procedures/guidance etc	PGR Student Representatives Procedures
Policy owner:	Claire Faichnie, PGR and Researcher Development Manager
Lead contact:	Claire Faichnie