POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH HANDBOOK

Chapter 6 - PGR Student Voice Partnership: Code of Good Practice

[Partner Institutions: All partner institutions delivering programmes validated by the University of Exeter are required to observe this code of good practice.]

Contents

1.	Introduction and Principles	1
2.	Purpose of a Student Voice Action Plan	. 2
3.	Department Process	. 3
4.	Faculty Process	. 5
5.	Doctoral College Process	. 6
6.	Student Representation	. 7
7.	Partner Institutions	. 8

1. Introduction and Principles

- 1.1. Students play an important role in shaping improvements to the quality of the student experience. This Code of Good Practice is designed to facilitate a process of creative engagement with the student experience, ensuring that issues and suggestions may be considered by staff in partnership with the student community.
- 1.2. While this Code lays out broad parameters for the engagement of students in the management and review of postgraduate research provision, local Department-level engagement is the core of this partnership. Departments are therefore encouraged to use this Code as a framework to establish additional local processes which best meet the needs of their students.
- 1.3. This code is the equivalent of the Student Voice Partnership code for taught programmes, although the structure of postgraduate research provision is designed to reflect the needs of postgraduate research students.

- 1.4. Each Faculty must produce one or more Student Voice Action Plans outlining the engagement of students in this process, covering all research degrees delivered by that Faculty.
- 1.5. The management of student representation for courses registered in Exeter is the responsibility of Exeter Students' Guild (the Students' Guild).
- 1.6. The management of student representation for courses based in Cornwall is the responsibility of Falmouth and Exeter Students' Union (the Students' Union).
- 1.7. All PGR students **should** have the opportunity to engage in this process. This chapter refers to an Academic Representation "Toolkit". The Toolkit is a collection of ways to engage students at Faculty, Department, discipline, programme or research group level beyond traditional meeting processes, both through formal and informal means.

2. Purpose of a Student Voice Action Plan

- 2.1. To enable postgraduate research students and staff at Faculty, Department, discipline, programme or research group level to jointly participate in improving the quality of postgraduate research student provision.
- 2.2. To disseminate praise and examples of good practice, and to identify and address areas of concern to postgraduate research students and staff.
- 2.3. To facilitate communication between postgraduate research students and staff within a Faculty, Department, discipline, programme, research group, or doctoral training partnership regarding actions taken and outcomes reached in response to concerns, ideas and praise received from postgraduate research students.
- 2.4. To facilitate postgraduate research student contributions at all levels of decisionmaking concerning unreserved business within the Department, Faculty and University.

- 2.5. To provide documentary evidence of the participation of postgraduate research students in the quality assurance and development of the postgraduate research programmes delivered by the Department and Faculty.
- 2.6. To assist in the inclusion of all new and existing postgraduate research students into academic networks, and the development of those networks.

3. Department Process

- 3.1. The Faculty Director of Postgraduate Research **must** nominate a member of staff for each Department who will be responsible for leading on that Department's activities in relation to this Code of Good Practice. This may be the Department Director of Postgraduate Research, or a nominated deputy.
- 3.2. A Student Voice Action Plan **should** be used to record agreed actions and outputs from all conversations relating to student experience, including relevant context and details of discussions where a record of this having taken place is necessary, and details of activities undertaken as outlined in the Academic Representation Toolkit. The nominated Department lead (as outlined in <u>3.1 above</u>) is responsible for liaising with the nominated Administrator (as outlined in <u>5.1 below</u>) to ensure the Student Voice Action Plan is updated with any such Department activities for reporting into the Faculty process.
- 3.3. Any activities undertaken should be open to the entire postgraduate research student cohort within a Department. Where the sheer number of postgraduate research students renders such an activity impossible to administer, additional and/or alternative activities should be arranged.
- 3.4. In the spirit of ongoing partnership and dialogue, students and staff should aim to identify and resolve matters as they arise outside of meetings, unless further discussion, escalation, or action only available through a formal meeting is required. Outcomes of such activities **must** be recorded appropriately in the relevant Student Voice Action Plan.

- 3.5. Over the course of an academic year, the Student Voice Action plan should include, through methods of engagement as outlined in the Academic Representation Toolkit (or other processes established locally in accordance with $\underline{\text{1.2 above}}$), details of discussions with students (and any resulting actions) on at least the following themes:
 - a. Supervision arrangements.
 - b. Wellbeing and support (including PGR Pastoral Tutor arrangements).
 - c. Research facilities and resources (including study space, Library and IT).
 - d. Research skills and professional development (including training, development, and careers support).
 - e. Research culture and community (including seminar series, events and equality, diversity and inclusivity, and barriers to access or learning).
 - f. Progress and assessment (including vivas, the upgrade process, and annual monitoring).
 - g. Student voice (including student-led projects and events, the effectiveness of Academic Representation, and the actions of the Department, Faculty, and Students' Guild or Students' Union in response to students' views and opinions).
 - h. Outcomes of the PRES survey, and any action plans arising from these results.
- 3.6. Where possible, Departments **should** take full advantage of online meeting technology available to ensure that all cohorts within its remit can be included and represented. The Department Director of Postgraduate Research (or nominated deputy) is responsible for ensuring that the views of all students are represented (e.g. part-time students, international students, and those based off-campus).
- 3.7. Students **should** be invited to relevant supplementary activities on specific matters. For example, to focus on issues relating to a specific research group/cohort, such as for individual programmes or doctoral research centres; to receive a report from the Department Director of Postgraduate Research on any departmental developments; or to specifically discuss the Department's Quality Review and Enhancement process.

4. Faculty Process

- 4.1. Each Faculty **should** produce as many Student Voice Action Plans for each academic year as is appropriate to properly represent the interests of students within that Faculty's individual Departments, disciplines and/or research groups. This should take into account the range and diversity of the postgraduate research provision within the Faculty, subject to the recommendations of the Students' Guild or Students' Union, and **must** be at least one Action Plan per Faculty.
- 4.2. The Faculty **must** ensure that there are clear and effective reporting mechanisms into the wider Faculty processes from any departmental, discipline or research group level activities.
- 4.3. Each Faculty should hold a meeting of staff and student representatives at least three times a year to review the Student Voice Action Plan. This can be outside usual academic term time where required, subject to staff and postgraduate research student availability. Faculty Directors of Postgraduate Research (or a nominated deputy) **must** be involved in this review process.
- 4.4. The Student Voice Action Plans for each Faculty should be a standing item on the agenda of the Faculty's Postgraduate Research Committee (or equivalent).
- 4.5. The Faculty **must** invite student representatives to attend the Postgraduate Research Committee (or equivalent) for the discussion of Student Voice Action Plans.
- 4.6. Faculties should ensure that any calendar of committee meetings facilitates timely discussion of issues raised by students where possible.
- 4.7. The Faculty Director of Postgraduate Research (or nominated deputy) should be responsible for chairing any formal meeting which takes place under this Code (such as that outlined in 4.3 above). Where a student representative wishes to chair a meeting, the Faculty DPGR (or nominated deputy) should support the student as a co-chair.

5. Doctoral College Process

- 5.1. The Doctoral College **should** provide a member of staff responsible for administering each Faculty's Student Voice Action Plan. Where this is not possible or alternative arrangements are agreed, the Faculty DPGR (or nominated deputy) will arrange administrative support from the Faculty for this purpose.
- 5.2. The Doctoral College appointed Administrator is responsible for recording and updating the Student Voice Action Plan and should also be responsible for administration of any formal meetings which discuss the Student Voice Action Plan, including booking rooms, sending invites and online meeting links, and taking notes during the meeting. The Student Voice Action Plan should clearly indicate who attended each meeting and their role.
- 5.3. The Student Voice Action Plan **should** be made available to all students and staff in the Faculty through an appropriate online medium from the beginning of Term 1 in each academic year.
- 5.4. Any updates to the Student Voice Action Plan required following conversations with students and staff (as outlined in 3.2 above and 4.3 above) should normally be made by the Administrator within one month of the activity taking place.
- 5.5. An updated Student Voice Action Plan **should** be forwarded by the Administrator to the Faculty in advance of the Faculty's Postgraduate Research Committee.
- 5.6. An updated Student Voice Action Plan **should** be forwarded by the Administrator to the Students' Guild or the Students' Union three times a year, following the review meeting outlined in 4.3 above.
- 5.7. The Administrator **should** provide items for discussion as required by the thematic topics listed in 3.5 above, such as PRES survey reports and material arising from the Quality Review and Enhancement Framework.

5.8. The administrative support provided by the Doctoral College to support the Student Voice Action Plan will be limited to the administration of 3 Faculty level meetings per Faculty per year, and 6 additional hours of support for other Student Voice Action Plan activities per Faculty per year, as needed by the Faculty.

6. Student Representation

- 6.1. Anyone studying any research degree is eligible to volunteer as a PGR student representative, regardless of their course title, by applying to the Students' Guild or Students' Union in accordance with the process outlined in <u>O below</u>. Following appointment, the Students' Guild and the Students' Union will provide nominated University colleagues (as outlined in this code) with a full list of PGR student representatives.
- 6.2. The Students' Guild and the Students' Union are responsible for determining the recruitment and selection process of student representatives in their respective jurisdictions. The Faculties, the Doctoral College, and the Students' Guild or Students' Union are jointly responsible for promoting and supporting the recruitment process.
- 6.3. Any recruitment under <u>6.2 above</u> should be conducted such as to ensure continuity of representation over the summer.
- 6.4. The responsibility for managing the role descriptions of any student representative positions, including the specific positions available and the expectations and duties of the roles, lies with the Students' Guild and the Students' Union.
- 6.5. The Students' Guild and the Students' Union are responsible for the organisation and running of training sessions for student representatives, supported as appropriate by the Faculties, Departments, and/or Doctoral College.
- 6.6. Where it is beneficial to both students and the University and only following discussion and approval with the Students' Guild or Students' Union, student representatives may be invited to take on additional responsibilities. This **may** include invitations to sit on

- University Working Groups and Faculty-level Research meetings, acting as representatives on University service offerings, or organising academic events.
- 6.7. Any student may attend any meeting of staff and student representatives as a nonparticipating observer if they are being represented at that meeting. Members of the Students' Guild or Students' Union staff teams **may** attend meetings in each Faculty, to provide information or rep support, also as non-participating observers.
- 6.8. Further details about student representative roles and responsibilities are available from the Students' Guild and the Students' Union.

7. Partner Institutions

7.1. The University **must** ensure that for all partnership arrangements the students on the programmes in question must have an opportunity to provide their own views and opinions, and to otherwise improve the quality of postgraduate research student provision.