

Research Student Representatives

Role and responsibilities

As research students, you form a vital part of the strong research community at Oxford Brookes University. The Graduate College is central to this research community and is student-focused, enabling research students to have a corporate voice that can be heard at a senior level. In addition to the Graduate College, the University's research committees provide an excellent forum where students are encouraged to become involved in the wider research community and put forward suggestions for developing and improving research degree provision across the University.

Important aspects of the role of a Research Student Representative are to represent and engage with other research students within your faculty or department. You will attend meetings and act as a conduit between students and the University, taking forward matters and students' views that arise from within the faculties and those that occur centrally and raise them where it matters within the University. You will ensure that feedback is taken back to the group of students you represent in your department and by doing so ensure that students are kept up to date with current initiatives and developments, and feel that their views and concerns are taken seriously.

How are Student Representatives recruited?

An email will be sent out to all research students before the beginning of each academic year, inviting expressions of interest in becoming a Research Student Representative. The role of Research Student Representatives will also be advertised as part of the **BrookesID** scheme at <https://www.brookes.ac.uk/brookesid/> throughout the year.

If more students put themselves forward for the role than we could normally accommodate, we would look to increase the numbers of Research Student Representatives on the committee. If this was not possible, roles will be allocated on a first-come first-served basis, and any students we could not initially accommodate would be placed on a reserve list and contacted as soon as a place became available.

Support and Benefits

- The ability to make yourself stand out as a leader by working closely with academic staff both within your faculty and the wider University.
- The opportunity to make a real difference to research students within the University and improve their (and your) experience at Brookes.
- The chance to develop the sort of soft skills that employers like to see, which will boost your CV and enhance your employability.
- Opportunity to attend focus group meetings twice each year, in order to give feedback on the role and responsibilities of Student Representatives.
- Student Representative briefing session, prior to first meeting, giving an overview of the requirements of the role and guidance on ways of carrying out these responsibilities (e.g. options for communicating with students, gathering feedback, reporting feedback and reporting back to students on outcomes).
- We can provide, upon request, a letter confirming your involvement as a Research Student Representative and the responsibilities you held.
- Successful completion of this activity will count as an achievement entitled Active Academic Representative under the Connectedness category in the **Brookes ID** scheme.

Main responsibilities for all Research Student Representatives:

- Work with the Research Degrees Team to ensure the students you represent know who you are and how they can contact you;
- Engage with research students within your faculty and, where appropriate, seek feedback on matters relating to research students' academic experience;
- Raise student feedback and issues on both a formal and informal basis and if there are issues you do not agree with or wish to associate yourself with, forward them to the Secretary of the appropriate committee to raise anonymously via the Chair's Notes;
- Where possible, engage with University staff to create positive changes to the research student experience at Brookes;
- Complete actions assigned to you at meetings and report back to students in your department with the outcomes to their queries;
- Refer students' individual issues and non-academic issues outside of your area of responsibility to the Research Degrees Team in the first instance, who will advise according or liaise with the appropriate person or department.

We recognise that the priority for any research student is the completion of their thesis and your research degree programme must always take priority. There are several different ways in which Research Student Representatives can get involved and the key roles and responsibilities will vary depending on which Committee or Group you join. Research Student Representatives are not required to commit to all the areas of engagement and we would only expect Research Student Representatives to be on one Committee; however, if both yourself and your supervisor are happy with the time commitment, you would be welcome to join more than one Committee or Group. When taking up a role on any of the Committees or Groups, the different areas of interest and responsibilities will be discussed and agreed with you. It is also possible for Research Student Representatives to send an alternate if they are unable to attend a meeting. You can also pass comments to another Research Student Representative to raise on your behalf, or you may contact the Secretary to request they raise an issue anonymously.

All new student representatives will be inducted into the role by a member of the Research Degrees Team so that they feel confident about taking on the role and understand the processes for carrying out their responsibilities. In addition, they will liaise with the Faculty Research Office regarding the specific elements of the role that relate to faculty activities. A set of procedures will be issued to all new representatives so that they are aware of how particular aspects of their role should be undertaken.

Graduate College Steering Group

<https://sites.google.com/a/brookes.ac.uk/gcsg/>

(We do not limit the number of Research Student Representatives in this group and aim to have a minimum of one representative from each faculty. Students would normally join the committee for one to two academic years, depending on other commitments.)

The Graduate College Steering Group (GCSG) is responsible to the Research Degrees Committee and Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee for research students, training and the quality, standards, promotion and operation of the research programmes and degrees.

Research Student Representative responsibilities:

- Attend Graduate College Steering Group meetings up to four times per year and present all feedback collected from students;
- Email the Secretary to offer apologies if unable to attend a meeting, along with details of any issues and feedback collected from students to be raised at the meeting;
- Regularly communicate with other Student Representatives and the Research Degrees Team, passing on research student news and success stories, as well as assisting in the promotion of social and networking events;
- Attend focus group meetings up to two times per year to discuss new initiatives and give feedback on Graduate College events and other activities;
- Assist with a meet and greet system for new research students enrolling at the University, up to three times per year (September, January and April enrolments).

Research Degrees Committee

<https://sites.google.com/a/brookes.ac.uk/rdc/>

(Up to four Research Student Representatives. Students would normally join the committee for one to two academic years, depending on other commitments.)

The Research Degrees Committee (RDC) has devolved responsibility for all matters related to the University's research degree programmes and research students. It produces regulations and codes of practice in line with external requirements and HEFCE guidelines and reports to the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee on all areas of its remit.

The Committee is also responsible for continually monitoring the programme at all levels across the University to ensure that faculties are working within the regulations and codes. It monitors supervision, students' progress, reviews facilities both at faculty and University level, and reports its findings to the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee and the University via its Annual Report.

Research Student Representative responsibilities:

- Attend Research Degree Committee meetings up to four times per year and present all feedback collected;
- Email the Secretary to offer apologies if unable to attend a meeting, along with details of any issues and feedback collected from students to be raised at the meeting;

- Take part in the discussions arising from agenda items and contribute more widely to the work of the committee as required.

Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee

<https://sites.google.com/a/brookes.ac.uk/rkec/>

(Up to four Research Student Representatives. Students would normally join the committee for one to two academic years, depending on other commitments.)

The Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC) holds primary responsibility for the functional operation of the powers of Academic Board in relation to research activities and postgraduate research students.

RKEC is responsible to the Academic Board for policy and processes for research and knowledge exchange, research students and the quality, standards and operation of research programmes and degrees.

The Committee also develops strategic policy, for recommendation to the Academic Board, including policies and practice relating to recruitment and admission, develops research training and monitors the work of schools and directorates in relation to research and knowledge exchange.

Research Student Representative responsibilities:

- Attend RKEC meetings up to four times per year;
- Raise matters related to research programmes, student experience and facilities;
- Raise issues that have been put forward by students in your department regarding research degree programmes;
- Take part in the discussions arising from agenda items and contribute more widely to the work of the committee as required.

University Research Ethics Committee

<https://www.brookes.ac.uk/Research/Research-ethics/Review/Staff/University-research-ethics-committee/>

(Two Research Student Representatives. Students would normally join the committee for one to two academic years, depending on other commitments.)

The University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) has a multi-disciplinary membership that includes academic researchers (staff and students) from across the faculties and non-research lay members from within and outside the University. It has specific responsibility for reviewing research undertaken by staff and research students (registered for an MPhil, MPhil/PhD or Professional Doctorate) that involves human participants, data or material, including both approving proposed research studies prior to the commencement of data collection and monitoring the progress of research that it has approved, to ensure compliance with approved ethics procedures.

UREC is also responsible for ensuring that faculties have approved procedures in place for the ethics review of projects undertaken within their faculty. Research Ethics Officers provide an annual report to UREC on ethics review in their faculty and UREC in turn provides an

annual report to the University Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee and the Board of Governors.

The Chair of UREC will meet with students who put themselves forward for the role of Research Student Representative on this Committee, in order to fully explain the role and the work involved.

General Responsibilities for Members of UREC

- Attend meetings, 2:00pm to 5:30pm ten times a year during term time and two during the summer vacation (June and July) at the Headington Campus (two Research Student Representatives to alternative attendance);
- Read and critically assess applications in relation to the principles of research ethics;
- Take primary responsibility for reviewing and presenting at least one application per meeting (two to three is more usual);
- Contribute to the review process of each application discussed at the meetings to ensure that ethical standards are met;
- Consider research proposals from the participants' perspective in particular.

Faculty Research Degrees Sub-Committees

(Students would normally join these committees for one to two academic years, depending on other commitments.)

Faculty of Health and Life Sciences

Research Student Representative responsibilities:

- Collect feedback/suggestions/queries from fellow students in the Department / DTP;
- Attend RDSC meetings four times per year, reporting any issues to the committee;
- Report any outcomes of the committee meetings to fellow students as required.

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Research Student Representative responsibilities:

- Attend faculty RDSC meetings twice per year and raise issues under the standing item on the non-confidential agenda;
- Attend faculty RKEC meetings three times per year (RKEC Student Representatives only);
- Regularly canvas fellow research students and then raise any issues or feedback at faculty RDSC meetings;
- Optional involvement in organising the annual Faculty Research Conference.

Faculty of Technology, Design and Environment

Research Student Representative responsibilities:

- Attend the non-confidential part of the RDSC meetings three to four times per year;
- Accept/decline the Google invitation to the RDSC meeting (or let the Research Administrator know by email if unable to attend);

- Communicate with other students and report any student issues to RDSC;
- Be prepared to get feedback and opinions from fellow students on particular issues raised at RDSC (if asked to do so) and to report back to the subsequent RDSC;
- Be prepared to read the RDSC meeting agendas, minutes and papers.

Other optional responsibilities:

- Encourage fellow students to be part of the volunteer Planning Committee for the TDE Annual Research Student Conference (the call for the Planning Committee normally goes out at the end of each year);
- Gather feedback from fellow students about Doctoral Training Programme (DTP) initiatives.

Oxford Brookes Business School

Research Student Representative responsibilities:

- Attend faculty RKEC meetings (held four times per year) and faculty RDSC meetings (held twice per year);
- Attend faculty Welcome Mornings for newly arrived PhD students, to give a student's perspective in response to questions and so that the new students know at least one or two of their peers straight away;
- Act as a first sounding board for faculty staff and provide feedback on student experience and University facilities.