

PGR Rep Core Training

FOR PGR REPS (ANYONE
REPRESENTING PHD, MRES, MPhil
RESEARCH STUDENTS)



Bristol SU – A Union for All Students

Welcome and congratulations on becoming a **PGR Representative**! We're so excited to have you join our team of representatives.

You play a key part in amplifying researchers needs, interests and advocacy. It is essential work you do by attending your Faculty Academic Rep Forum, presenting the voices of your fellow students and gathering feedback.

This role is a great opportunity to develop your vital skills for navigating the research environment too; being able to wade through different systems is vital for any academic.

This core training should take about 30 minutes to complete, with a short quiz at the end to check your understanding of the role!

From

Jordan & Sharan - your Undergraduate and Postgraduate Education Officers

Section 1:

Introduction and Support for your Role



Support from Bristol SU

The SU Academic Representation Team is here to offer support and advice to you throughout the year. You can always talk to any staff member in your school or faculty who you feel comfortable with, but the SU Team will be able to offer an outside perspective if you need it.

We are independent membership-based charity and we're passionate about representing your views accurately. We also have different services available for support including our Academic Advice for any extensions or our Housing Advice should that be necessary.

If you ever have questions about your role or would like some guidance on something you are working on, feel free to get in touch!

We are always happy to hear about Academic Rep wins and projects you are proud of, alongside offering support. Get in contact with us at **bristolsu-representation@bristol.ac.uk**



The Academic Representation System

Academic Rep Structure

PGR Reps

Attend **Faculty Academic Rep Forums (FARFs)** to represent their Subject/Interest Area and/or School. You also be invited to a **School Academic Rep Forum (SARF)**

Faculty Reps

Attend & Chair the **Faculty Academic Rep Forums (FARFs)**, representing PGRs from across the academic faculty. There are two Faculty Reps per Faculty. Staff also join to offer insight and help make change!



Your Skills

As a rep you'll gain loads of new experiences – including but not limited

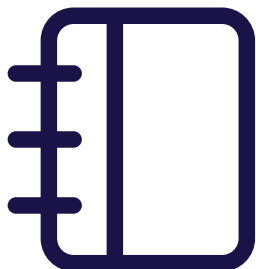
to:



Applicable skills from your research to your repping: You can use your research skills gained as a means of data-gathering as a Rep!



Managing relationships: so much of being a Rep is managing the relationship between academics and PGRs, as well as admin staff. Great training for academia or the working world



Institutional Navigation: Being a Rep gives you an insight as to how universities actually work.

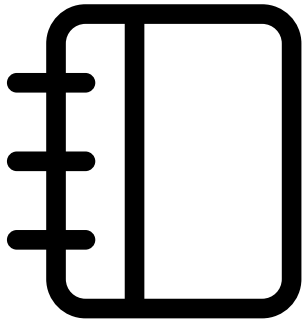
Learn how to navigate the institution early in your career!

How Do We Support Your Development?



Bristol Careers Service

There is a lot more bespoke support for PGRs in the Career Service now - we highly encourage you to take advantage of it, especially as being a Rep may give you new experiences/skills!



Presenting and Posters

We know how much the PGR experience may mean presenting a talk or a poster – you can expand those skills too as part of being a Rep, in a lower stakes environment

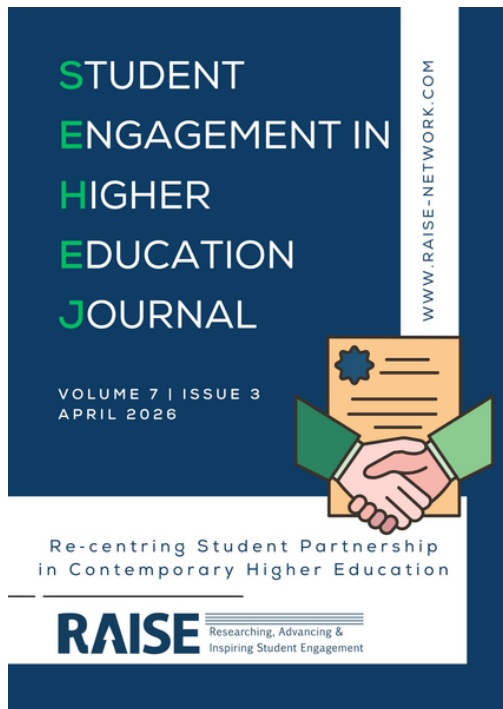


LinkedIn Recommendation

Alongside the experiences and training opportunities you have access to, you can also work towards an exclusive LinkedIn Recommendation from us at the Students' Union through the following criteria:

- Complete this core training.
- Attend at least one Democratic Event (such as Student Council).
- Participate in an additional event run by the Academic Representation Team.
- Let the Academic Representation Team know you are ready for a recommendation.

Reward and Recognition!



Potential Publishing Opportunities!

You could even consider publishing something in the Student Engagement Journal in Higher Education about your work as a Rep, adding to your publications!

The Bristol SU:50

We also have the prestigious Bristol SU:50 – our 50 most influential students or groups – which any Rep can be submitted to as a nominee.

Section 2:

Your Role and

Responsibilities

Three main components:



We will break these down now!

Gathering and Understanding Student Feedback

Your first key responsibility as a PGR Rep is gathering and understanding opinions of fellow students. We are looking for qualitative data, that is essential and sits at the heart of student voice sharing. Is there research you've done with qualitative methods that could help gather feedback?

This involves:

- Regularly communicating with those in your school, your office/work area to hear their opinions.
- This might mean hosting a drop-in for fellow PGRs, sending out WhatsApp or email communication or even potentially a short questionnaire
- Taking an intersectional approach to include students from different backgrounds and experiences from your own
- Attending Bristol SU democratic events, such as Student Council and the Annual Members Meeting (AMM), to represent PGR interests at the Students' Union

Work with Staff and Students: Finding Solutions

Once you get an understanding of student issues, your second key job involves working with both University staff and students to develop solutions. You will attend Faculty Academic Rep Forums to give feedback on behalf your study area/academic schools.

This is a chance once again to think about some of your research skills in problem solving.

You will do this by:

- Attending **Faculty Academic Rep Forums** in your school to report findings to university staff if ran in your faculty
- Working more informally with staff to raise and resolve issues where appropriate
- Enhancing your teamwork skills by working with other Reps to be a powerful collective voice
- Co-creating solutions and alternatives to offer staff, focusing on what works well alongside what could be improved

Communicating Outcomes & Updates

Communicating outcomes and updates is your third key job.

You will do this by:

- Reporting outcomes and updates on the issues you've raised back to your PGRs in your school after meetings with university staff.
- Working out the best way to communicate updates to students and raising awareness of where they can access these updates via:
 - Blackboard
 - Emails
 - Social Media
 - Verbally/Word of mouth
- Contacting Bristol SU's Rep Team to let us know of any solutions or barriers you've found in making change on your course!
- updating your 'Rep Hub' so fellow PGR Reps can see what you're working on and link up

Additional Opportunities

Outside of your three key responsibilities, there are lots you can get involved with. Depending on your interests, you can choose to engage in:

- Improving a sense of community on your course through organising social activities.
- Learning new skills from outside of your discipline!
- Working with the **Student Community Organisers or Full-Time Officers** on issues such as Sustainability, Wellbeing or EDI (Equality, Diversity & Inclusion).
- **Becoming a School Rep:** acting as a bridge between the School Student Academic Rep Forums and Faculty Academic Rep Forums. You can volunteer for this in one of your initial School Academic Rep Forums meetings .
- **Getting involved in university-wide consultations:** through our Student Academic Representation Network meetings and other opportunities offered through our team! These will count towards a LinkedIn recommendation from our team.
- **Making the most of democratic events:** alongside attending Annual Members' Meeting and Student Council as part of your role, consider submitting an Idea to the Ideas Board about something you are passionate about!

Contacting Students

One of the major parts of your role (and one of the parts we get the most questions on) is contacting students on your course in ways that work for you and for them.

You have a variety of different methods to acquire feedback! In this section, we'll go over those to get you thinking about how best to engage your cohort. We are still ever evolving into how we engage and contact PGRs as well.



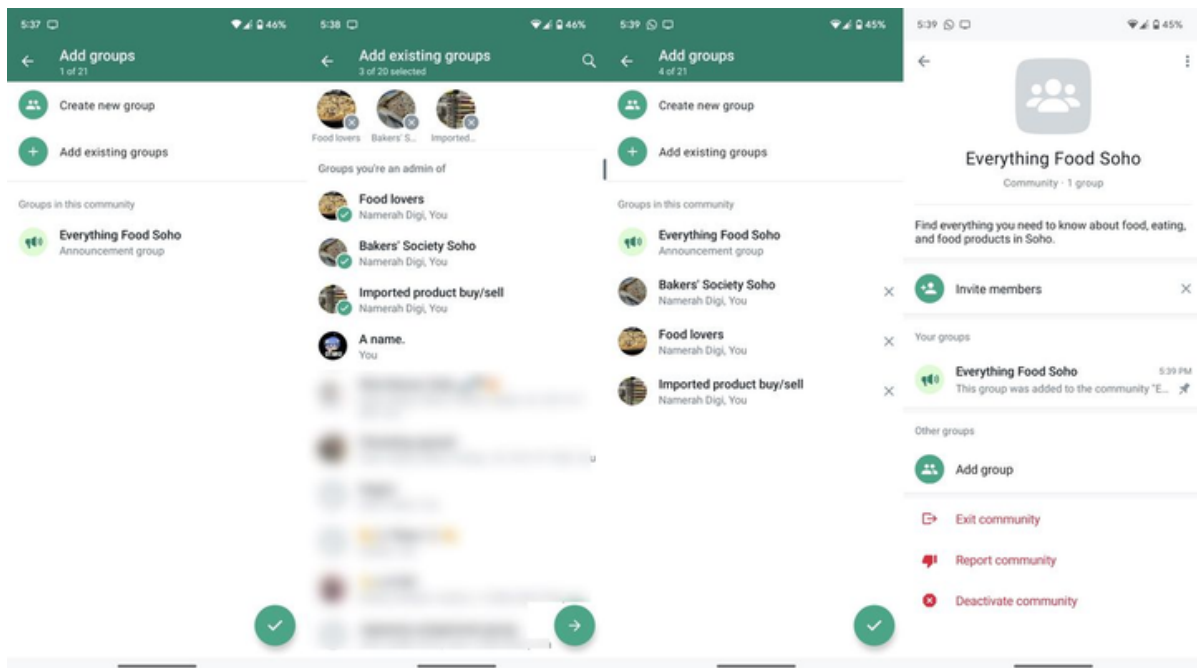
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Contacting Students: Social Media and Emails

- Social Media can be an easy way to let students know that you are there to represent them! You can ask your department for a shout out if they have a social media page - stretch your digital skills and get creative!
- Contacting your fellow students: previously Reps have used WhatsApp groups to talk to students. In these chats you can share drop-in times or start conversations about key areas of academic experience.
- School Admin staff can send out messages to cohorts on your behalf, or you to contact your cohort (e.g. via a mailing group).
- Communication between Academic Reps is something we're very keen to help expand. Through the Rep Hub, one of many things you will be able to do is to contact your fellow Course Reps for any advice on best practice on how best to get feedback. You can also see if they are working on similar issues and work together. Look out for an invite from us to get onboard the Rep Hub!

“Contacting my fellow PGRs is hard!”

We know there are more barriers to contacting PGRs than there are for taught Reps contacting taught students



[Text text text]

It's a chance to build a virtual community space, that can double up as a place to gather feedback and data! See this as a tool to develop your representation.

Section 3:

Handling Data

and Signposting

Handling Data

As a Rep, you might need to handle personal data. Anyone who handles or processes personal data needs to do so in line with the law. This includes making sure you know the basic principles of the **General Data Protection Act (GDPR)**.

Keep reading for the basic principles of GDPR you must follow. If you are unsure about anything GDPR-related, contact bristolsu-representation@bristol.ac.uk

What is personal data?

Personal data means any information that relates to a living individual who can be identified. This includes the obvious things like: name, email address and phone number.

But it also refers to some other information, such as religious belief or health status. You need to be very careful when you handle someone else's personal information as misuse or sharing could put this person or their privacy at risk.

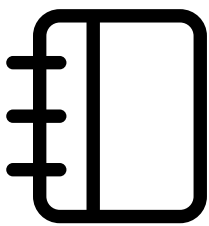


Five Tips for Handling Data

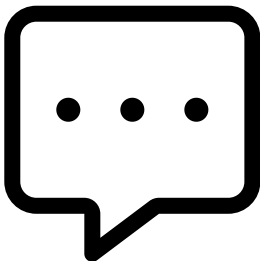


Only use it for the purpose it was collected for.

For example, if you collect phone numbers to use in case of an emergency on an event, this does not mean you can use these phone number to contact attendees outside of this event, unless they have said they're happy for you to do so



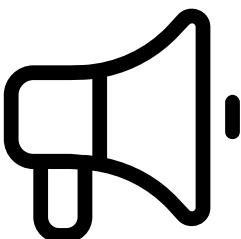
Be transparent. Make sure people know what you're collecting or using their information for, where you'll hold it, and when you'll delete it. This also means you should not share data with other people or groups, unless you have the data-owner's explicit consent



Only collect the data that you need. In most cases to do your job well, all you need is a student's name and email address so that you can contact them as a Rep. GDPR specifies that you should only collect the information that you need to perform necessary functions



Look after any data you hold. When someone gives you access to their personal information they are trusting you to look after it



Set out when you will get rid of it, and actually get rid of it. GDPR says that you can't hold someone's personal information indefinitely

Using Data

Being a Rep isn't just voicing your opinion, but speaking for a cohort. One of the major barriers Reps have faced previously has been trying to reach out about issues you know less about. This is where having an evidence-led approach is best.

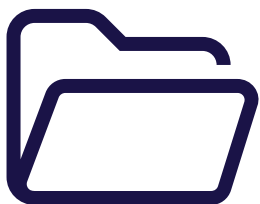
We at the students' union encourage you to take on a more research-orientated approach to your work. The SU Academic Rep Team can help you access data you may need or direct you to resources.

Below are some starting resources:



Bristol SU Research Team

Did you know we have a research team who publish their survey results on our website?



National Survey Results

Surveys are important as I'm sure you're aware. Particularly the **Postgraduate Research Experience Survey** completed every 2 years is vital data for you

“The” Student Voice versus “A” Student Voice

Your experience as a student is that you will not be able to have every experience ever! An important part of your role is considering the "lens" through which a student may see an issue. You are speaking for the student - thinking collectively can be hard but is very important.

The Student Voice...

- Using different methodologies of feedback to inform decision-making
- Working collaboratively with colleagues to understand issues
- Questioning your own biases to ensure you're representative of all voices and experiences, de-centring the personal

A Student Voice....

- Pressing on about an issue that just affects you
- Not looking at any previous data from your course
- Not consulting any students



University Quality Team and Student Quality Reviewers

Another area that will help enhance your course is through working with the University Quality Team. Each year, the University undertakes checks on the quality of teaching and education in different faculties. This review process is carried out by the University Quality Team, which is made up of university staff and Student Quality Reviewers (SQRs).

What are SQRs (Student Quality Reviewers)?

- Students who have been recruited and trained who review data, student experience into quality reports
- They “review” outside of their School
- They’re a part of the regulatory requirement for quality assurance and enhancement
- Your SQR will be in touch if your school is being reviewed - **it is important that you attend the meeting they set up**. If you cannot you must let them know and send your feedback via email!



Your Rep Community

Faculty Rep

An academic rep who represents the whole academic faculty. There are two Faculty Reps per faculty leading to a total of six. They will be in touch on the run-up to Faculty Academic Rep Forums (FARFs).

Full-Time Officers

Seven full-time workers, elected from the student body , to represent students full-time and lead your SU. You can always contact them about anything!

Student Community Organisers

Student Community Organisers help facilitate positive change on campus by engaging with the wider student body and bringing students together to address issues that affect many.

They help build collective power amongst students, and work to direct this power towards key stakeholders and decisionmakers who can enact change.

They work closely with Full-time Officers to develop and deliver campaigns that improve the student experience, while providing a link between students and the Bristol SU.

Your Rep Hub



Bristol SU

Bristol SU - Academic Rep Hub

Hello! Welcome to the Academic Rep Engagement Hub! Here, you can see who the reps are in your school and faculty, have access to training links, log in your projects and tasks and much more! Log in with the details you received via email.

Forgotten your pin? [Fill out this form](#) to request a pin reminder and we will email it to you.

Uni ID (ab12345)

Pin

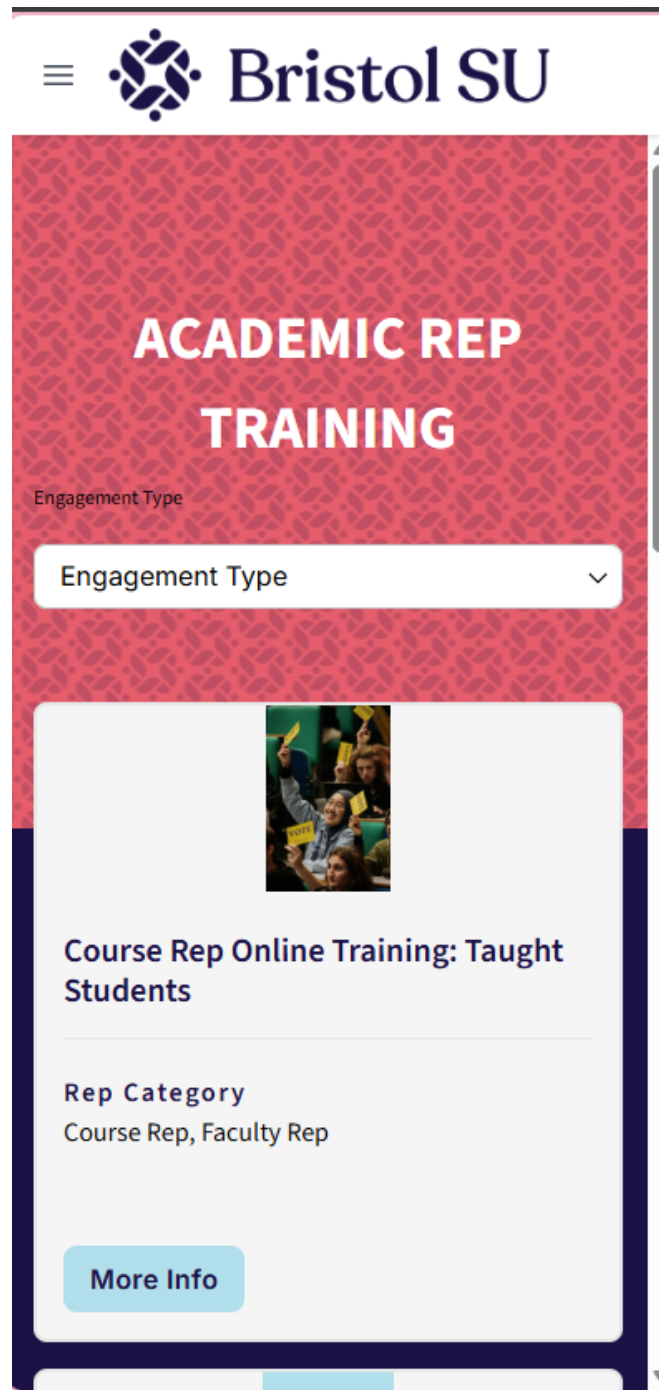
Log in

As part of your role, we have a bespoke Hub designed for all your Rep needs!

You can contact fellow Reps, log what you're working on and access all necessary support and training

It will be emailed to you with your PIN so you can log in and should look like this!

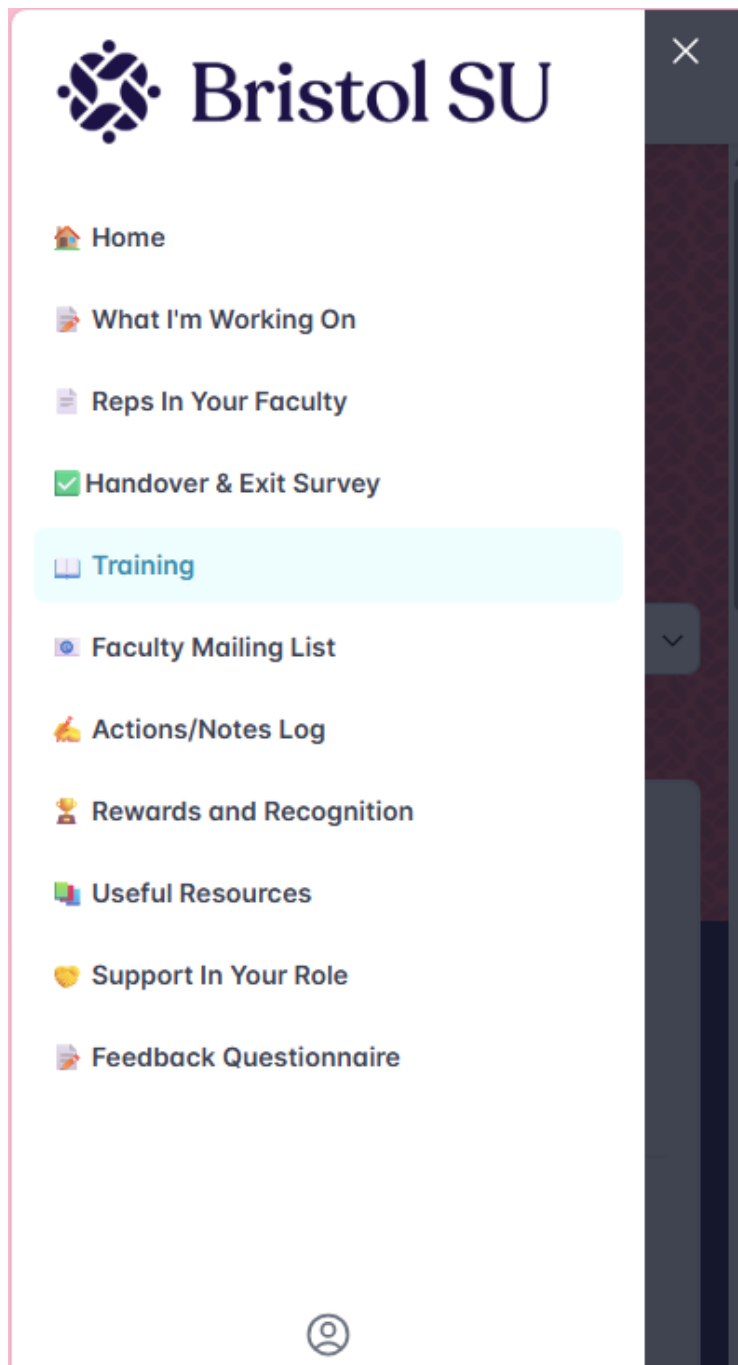
Your Rep Hub (2)



This is where you can access such things as:

- Rep Training
- Support resources including a terminology explainer
- A log to keep track of what you're working on!

Your Rep Hub (3)



You can also:

- Contact your Faculty Rep or fellow Reps on your course via our “Reps In Your Faculty” feature
- Nominate yourself or other Reps for Rep of the Month!
- Access other support information

Your booklet is complete.

[CLICK HERE AND HEAD OVER TO THE
MS FORM TO COMPLETE YOUR
ASSESSMENT!](#)

