

School of the Physical Sciences (SPS) Postgraduate Student Representative for Michaelmas Term 2020

The School of the Physical Sciences is seeking a Postgraduate Student Representative for Michaelmas Term 2020. This representative will need to be available to attend the following meetings:

Council of the School of the Physical Sciences (CSPS)

- Thursday 22 October 2020, 10am – 1pm, Bragg Committee Room, Physics / Virtual meeting via Zoom
- Thursday 19 November 2020, 10am – 1pm, Venue TBC / Virtual meeting via Zoom

Postgraduate Education Committee (PGC)

- Monday 2 November 2020, 2pm – 4pm, Venue TBC / Virtual meeting via Microsoft Teams

Following election, the School's Postgraduate Student Representative will be offered an introductory meeting with the Secretary of CSPS and PGC. An election to select the School's Postgraduate Student Representative for the 2021 calendar year will be held during the second half of November.

School of the Physical Sciences (SPS) statement on role of the student representatives

There are eight departments and one institution within the School of the Physical Sciences, covering Mathematics, Physical Sciences and Geography. The School is responsible for allocating core funds to departments and provides broad strategic focus across its constituent departments in a number of areas including: research activity, undergraduate and graduate education, estate needs, fundraising and human resources. As part of the University's annual planning cycle, the School prepares a financial and academic plan, which sets out strategic objectives, determines budgets as well as the flow of resources to departments. The School manages a wide range of administrative activities and projects across its departments and works alongside other Schools to further interdisciplinary research. The School has over 1500 members of staff, over 3000 students and an annual budget of over £100 million.

The governing body of the School is the Council of the School of the Physical Sciences and includes in its membership eight Heads of Department, the Director of the Isaac Newton Institute for Mathematical Sciences and three Faculty Board appointees (Faculty Boards of Earth Sciences and Geography, Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry). The membership of the Council of the School also includes one undergraduate and one postgraduate student member, elected by their peers within the constituent institutions of the School.

The Council of the School agenda covers a wide range of topics and student representatives have the right to attend the unreserved business (which is the majority of the agenda) and have full speaking rights. The student representatives are also invited to become members (on a similar basis) of two of the School's sub-committees: the postgraduate student representative to join the Postgraduate Education Committee and the undergraduate representative to join the Undergraduate Education Committee. Both these committees report to the Council of the School and deal in more detail on their respective areas of education.

The types of issues discussed at the Council of the School are:

- Setting the overall strategy and plans for the School;
- Appointments to University bodies;
- Responses to University consultations on matters that are not resource management;
- Fundraising;
- School governance;
- Education issues.

The Council of the School is the primary forum for discussion on educational policy. It is also the forum for discussions on wider ranging University issues or developments that are not specifically to do with resource management, and often involve a speaker from outside the School. Examples include proposed changes to the International Office, School approval for changes to courses or introduction of new courses, equality and diversity, consultations on governance matters affecting Faculties, Departments and Degree Committees and the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy.

Student representation provides an opportunity to influence the deliberations of the School and the decisions it makes. Our student representatives have been able to provide the student perspective during Council discussions and to raise queries and concerns about the matters under discussion. This is an important role and provides a contrasting perspective from that of the academic or the administrative.

Statement from prior Postgraduate Student Representative

This role puts you in contact with all the important people. As such, it is a key link role, and so it is essential that someone social but also reliable undertakes this work. Having said that, the time commitment outside of meetings (and meeting preparation) is a choice for the individual and could be rather minimal. Indeed, holding the School to account has not required any serious campaigning since, in my time, I have been convinced that it has had the best interests of its students at heart. One would hope this continues, and as long as it does, it means the role can be more usefully directed in the direction of providing feedback with the intent of improving what can be improved. So it is a positive role, and of course rather interesting if one is curious about these sorts of things.

I am happy to talk about this with anyone who wishes to know more.

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