

## **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, and 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 Graduate 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 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.

A previous SPS Postgraduate Student Representative said of the role:

*“Participating in this role on the Council of the School of the Physical Sciences was by far the most fulfilling responsibility I took on during my time at Cambridge. There is no better way to learn about the many challenges of setting the direction of a world-leading research university than to contribute to setting that direction. You need not be an expert on financial affairs or educational strategy to succeed in this role; what the Council needs is the student perspective on all aspects of life at Cambridge University. If you are a student who cares about improving the Cambridge experience for your peers and for generations to come, then you will be a great asset in this position.”*