

Global Academic Representation Structure

This paper was endorsed by UCLT on 7th June 2023.

Executive summary

Academic representation is the system in which students use their voice to make changes to their educational experience. The academic representation system is a key part of a university's quality assurance measures and guarantees that Heriot-Watt is informed by student's needs, concerns, and thoughts.

This proposal aims to ensure that Heriot-Watt University, as a global institution, has an equitable representation structure across Scottish, Dubai, and Malaysia campuses. This proposal is further motivated by the Student Partnership Agreement 2022-2023's section that aims to 'Enhance and develop our global Academic Representation structures, processes and ensure equitable student presence on University committees.' Furthermore, this proposal is centered around filling the representation gaps on certain campuses and coordinating role titles.

Current structure

Full Time Officer Team

UK	Dubai	Malaysia
President	President	President
VP Education	VP Academic (part-time role)	VP Academic (part-time role)
VP Community		VP Community (part-time role)
VP Wellbeing		VP Wellbeing (part-time role)
	VP Sports (part-time role)	VP Sports (part-time role)
	VP Events (part-time role)	

Part Time Officer Team (Academic Representation)

UK	Dubai	Malaysia
PGT MP		
PGR MP		
EGIS School MP	EGIS School Officer	EGIS School Officer
MACS EPS School MP	MACS School Officer	MACS School Officer
EPS School MP	EPS School Officer	EPS School Officer
SOSS School MP	SOSS School Officer	SOSS School Officer
SOTD School MP	SOTD School Officer	N/A
School Officers - 1 per Department (UG)		
Class Reps (UG & PGT) - 1 per Programme per Year		
Institute Reps (PGR)		

Election/ Appointment Scheme:

Position	Elected/ Appt'd	Election/ Recruitment	Start Date	End date
FTO	Elected	March	1 st June	31 st May*
Part time VP	Elected	March	1 st June (less engaged)	31 st May*
School MP/Officer	MPs are elected while Officers are appointed by the executive board	If elected, in March, if appointed June-August	September/ October (Availability in August for training)	31 st May
Department Officers	Appointed	April- August	September/ October (Availability in August for training)	
Class Reps	Either	September - April/May (trial in SOSS)		

Phase 1: Proposed changes for AY 2023/24

This phase intends to standardise the lower levels of academic representation. This bottom-up approach will be built on in the next phase.

Full Time Officer Team

UK	Dubai	Malaysia
President	President	President
VP Academic	VP Academic (part-time role)	VP Academic (part-time role)
VP Community		
VP Wellbeing		

Green: Name change for AY 23/24

Yellow: New for AY 23/24

Part Time Officer Team (Academic Representation)

UK	Dubai	Malaysia
PGT MP	PG Officer	PG Officer
PGR MP		
EGIS School MP	EGIS School Officer	EGIS School Officer
MACS EPS School MP	MACS School Officer	MACS School Officer
EPS School MP	EPS School Officer	EPS School Officer
SOSS School MP	SOSS School Officer	SOSS School Officer
SOTD School MP	SOTD School Officer	NA
GC School MP	GC School Officer	GC School Officer
Department Officers - 1 per Departments per Campus (UG) (except GFC)		
Class Reps (UG & PGT) - 1 per Programme per Year		
Institute Reps (PGR)		

Green: Name change for AY 23/24

Yellow: New for AY 23/24

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*Individual SRB can decide to a period of handover beyond this point

Phase 2: Proposed changes for AY 2024/25

This phase intends to ensure that the VP Academic roles transition into full-time roles. This change would ensure that the VP Academic can sit on academic committees and that there is capacity to sit in academic committees and to further enhance the Student Learning Experience of students equitably on all campuses. This would further ensure that the Presidents of all campuses have the capacity to work on community building activities.

Full Time Officer Team

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President	President	President
VP Academic	VP Academic	VP Academic
VP Community		
VP Wellbeing		

Green: Name change for AY 24/25

Yellow: New for AY 24/25

Part Time Officer Team (Academic Representation)

UK	Dubai	Malaysia
PGT MP	PG Officer	PG Officer
PGR MP		
EGIS School MP	EGIS School Officer	EGIS School Officer
MACS EPS School MP	MACS School Officer	MACS School Officer
EPS School MP	EPS School Officer	EPS School Officer
SOSS School MP	SOSS School Officer	SOSS School Officer
SOTD School MP	SOTD School Officer	NA
GFC School MP	GFC School Officer	GFC School Officer

Department Officers - 1 per Departments per Campus (UG) (except GFC)		
Class Reps (UG & PGT) - 1 per Programme per Year		
Institute Reps (PGR)		

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Reasoning behind these changes

These changes will alleviate the disparity across campuses in terms of engagement with, and capacity for, progressing change designed to enhance the student academic experience. Firstly, synchronizing all the role names to VP Academic will ensure that students and staff from all campuses that there is equitable academic representation globally. Alongside this, expanding the VP Academic role to full-time will ensure that the Dubai and Malaysia campuses have proportional time and resources to the Scotland campus. This decision would also alleviate the Presidents' workload, including delegating the attendance/participation in Academic committees and meetings. Furthermore, the global nature of the roles will help recruitment as it provides support for future career prospects.

Systemizing the School Officers across Malaysia and Dubai will establish academic representation branches out at a School level. This is the same case for School Members of Parliament (MPs) in Scotland, however, School MPS attend Student Parliament which is the student-led decision making of the Scottish Student Union. Nevertheless, School MPs still report to VP Academic and undertake the same responsibilities as School Officers. This is the next step forward in further improving academic feedback structures globally.

The name change from UG School Officer to Department Officers would ensure that students and staff understand they represent students at a department level (i.e., Maths, Biology, Brewing and Distilling).

Potential challenges

These changes may face several challenges that can be grouped into two areas. Firstly, challenges to recruit and elect /appoint part-time positions such as School Officers, School MPs, or Department Officers due to the positions being new or presenting a name change. Secondly, the additional task of creating additional resources required for the new positions and their allocation to staff members.

These challenges can be alleviated by the Academic Quality Team's work on creating global resources to help drive engagement. Additionally, the creation of a full-time VP Academic position for Malaysia and Dubai would also resolve these challenges as they would have time to boost recruitment and create additional resources.

Ensuring success

To ensure that the global changes to the academic structures succeed, there needs to be a shared responsibility in recruitment from both Heriot-Watt University and the Student Representative Bodies. These shared responsibilities should be assigned accordingly and in partnership on each campus. Furthermore, it is central to listen to student reps' feedback throughout both stages to ensure the changes made are optimising academic representation.

Summary

The proposal outlines how Heriot-Watt University, as a global institution, can establish an equitable representation structure across Scottish, Dubai, and Malaysia campuses. Therefore, ensuring students are being represented globally. The key changes to ensure that the Academic representation structure is equitable globally, would include:

- Homogenizing the VP Academic role globally;
- Establishing School Officers/ School MPs globally;
- Rename UG School Officers to Department Officers globally.