

# Doctoral School forum: Terms of reference

## 1. Context

- 1.1 Nottingham Trent University values students' views about their experiences of studying for their degrees. Good relationships between staff and students are fundamental to successful dialogue between the University and its student body. School forums are one of the channels through which NTU fosters this relationship and seeks to find ways to improve the quality of students' experiences. Other channels include:
- a. student representatives on course and School committees;
  - b. Evasys surveys at course and module level (for Professional Doctorate courses);
  - c. occasional project groups around new initiatives;
  - d. representation on institutional level academic committees.

## 2. Purpose

- 2.1 The purposes of School forums include:
- a. working in partnership to discuss ideas from students or staff about the learning experience, communications or other aspects of being a research degree student;
  - b. discussing learning and teaching practices, research, resources or facilities;
  - c. working jointly on items that contribute to student engagement or community-building within the School;
  - d. consultation about new institutional initiatives;
  - e. communicating suggested improvements to other University departments (for example the Library, Student Support Services or Estates);
  - f. receiving feedback about issues arising at course level, normally only when they impact across the School, and considering strategies for resolving them.
- 2.2 School forums are not expected to deal with individual complaints from students. Schools are instead expected to encourage students to use the University complaints procedure, normally the informal procedure outlined in the complaints guidance in the Quality Handbook Section 17E.

### **3. Meetings**

- 3.1 The Doctoral School Forum will normally meet termly, however additional meetings may be called to deal with specific projects. The dates for meetings will be circulated at the start of the academic year.
- 3.2 The Head of the Doctoral School will ensure that there is appropriate administrative support for the meetings.
- 3.3 Minutes of all meetings will be circulated to all students in the School, to Postgraduate Research (PGR) Tutors and Professional Doctorate Course Leaders, to all College Research Degrees Committees (CRDCs), and to University Research Degrees Committee (URDC). Minutes circulated should not identify comments from individual members.
- 3.4 The Head of the Doctoral School will submit the minutes of all meetings to the Executive Student Forum.

### **4. Roles and responsibilities**

- 4.1 It is the responsibility of all members to identify and bring items for discussion and to engage constructively in a problem solving dialogue. Members must therefore be invited (and in the case of students, encouraged) to submit items for discussion prior to each meeting.
- 4.2 Student members are expected to consult with their peers in order to ensure that they are representing the views of their peers.
- 4.3 Student members are also expected to disseminate actions or other outcomes from the meetings amongst their peers.
- 4.4 The Head of Doctoral School is also responsible for ensuring actions and queries are taken up with the appropriate committees or departments within the University.

### **5. Membership**

- 5.1 Membership of the Doctoral School forum is as follows:
  - a. Head of the Doctoral School (normally the chair).
  - b. A representative group of students: these will normally be course representatives, but Schools may choose other recruitment systems (the process for recruiting student members will be transparent and communicated to students within the School).
  - c. Nottingham Trent Students' Union (NTSU) Vice-President Education.
  - d. Administrator.
  - e. Other staff from within the PGR Tutors or Professional Doctorate Course Leaders groups, or across the University as invited by the forum.

## 6. Operation

- 6.1 The Doctoral School should endeavour to ensure that the forum provides a useful environment for open and effective discussion, and that students feel that their voice is valued. Forums work best when students have a clearly understood reason for attending and that they feel that they are contributing to positive change.
- 6.2 The Doctoral School may consider convening smaller working parties of staff and students in order to address specific issues that would most effectively be pursued this way.
- 6.3 Part of the successful operation of School forums is the promotion of the outcomes and achievements back to students in the School. This will help promote partnership and engagement more broadly within the School.

<b>Policy owner</b>
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