

# RSCG(24)01: Guidelines for the Selection of Research Staff Representatives

## Background

Ensuring that researchers are represented and heard is a key aspiration of the University in pursuit of Priority 8 of the University's Strategic Plan: [to] "*Enhance the opportunities and support for early-career researchers*". The researcher representational structure and process for selecting research staff representation in departments, divisional fora, and on University-level committees and working groups are key mechanisms for meeting this objective. A revitalised representational structure for research staff was introduced in TT2020 to embed the consideration of the career and professional development of research staff within the decision-making structure of the Collegiate University.

The process outlined in this guidance builds on the exemplary work of Oxford Research Staff Society who pioneered the representational role of researchers at Oxford.

## Selection Principles

A key principle embedded within the structure is that research staff should have oversight and control of selecting their representatives. The primary goals are to ensure an open and transparent selection process and to promote a structure that facilitates information sharing between researcher representatives and a two-way flow of information between research staff and committees and working groups. This two-way flow provides a mechanism by which research staff have a voice in decisions that affect them and can hear of the activities and initiatives of committees and working groups.

## Equality and diversity considerations

The University's institutional Race Equality Charter and Athena SWAN reports have revealed a need to diversify membership in decision-making bodies at all levels. Building on the ongoing efforts to strengthen researcher representation, these guidelines have been prepared with due consideration to diversification. Data on the sex and ethnicity of all research staff representatives is collated annually (in HT) and shared with the Research Staff Consultation Group and included in the annual reports on the [Concordat for the Career Development of Researchers: Action Plan 2022-25](#).

## Overview of the Structure

### Faculty/department/college researcher representatives

Each faculty/department/college is encouraged to select one researcher representative, following the guidance below. Larger departments may decide to select more than one representative.

These faculty/department/ college representatives will meet collectively at a divisional/college research staff forum. Divisional research staff fora are supported by their respective division.

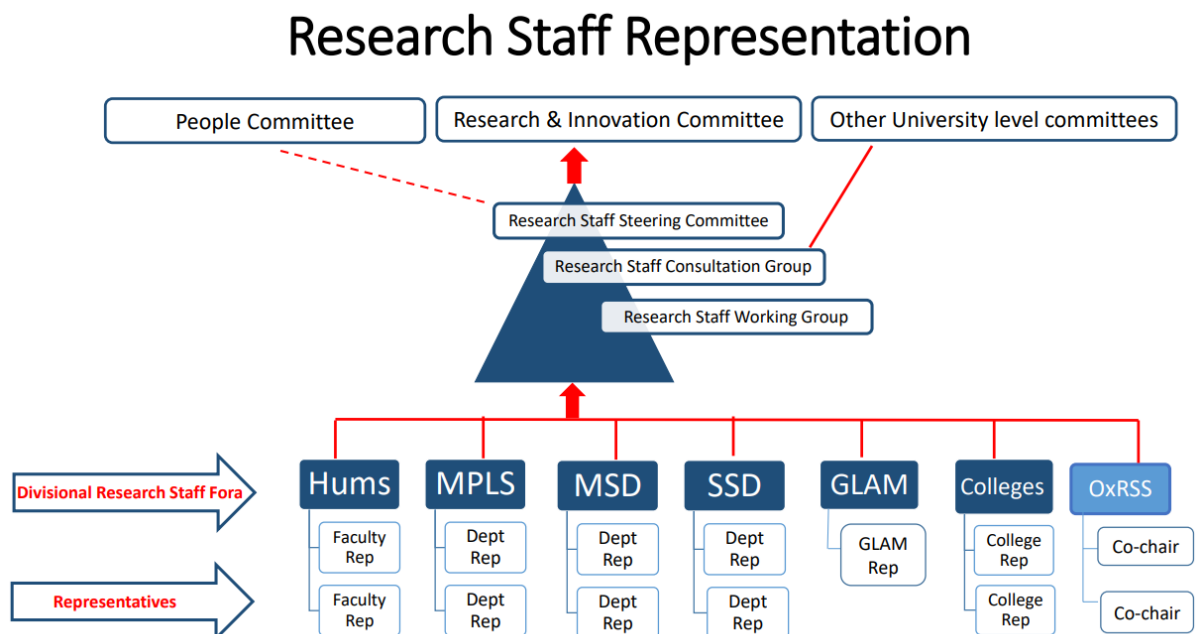
Each faculty/department/college research staff forum will select two Co-Chairs who will join the central Research Staff Consultation Group (RSCG). RSCG is supported by the Researcher Hub.

A list of all faculty/department/college researcher representatives can be found [here](#).

### Representative on University level committees and working groups

All University committees and working groups are encouraged to reserve on seat for a researcher representative. Researcher representatives on University level committees are selected following the guidance below.

A list of all researcher representatives on University committees and working groups can be found [here](#).



## Representation of Faculties/Departments/Colleges

The process for selecting representatives is likely to differ between faculties, departments, and colleges based on the numbers of research staff and the culture of different research areas. Where no representational structure currently exists, or existing fora or processes are to be revisited, the following structure and accompanying processes are suggested.

### Selection Process

Faculties/departments/colleges<sup>1</sup> are encouraged to introduce a transparent process for nomination of a 'Faculty/Department/College Researcher Representative'. The suggested process is to:

1. Invite Expressions of Interest (EOIs) from research staff, referring interested researchers to the agreed '*Researcher Representatives: Role, Values, and Commitments*'.<sup>2</sup>
2. EOIs should be limited in length (~100 words) and outline the reasons that the researcher would like to undertake the role and aspirations for community-building initiatives within the faculty /department /college.
3. Where more than one EOIs is received, there should be a mechanism by which researchers can select their representative (such as a researcher forum, specially convened meeting, or email circulation).
4. The selected researcher is appointed for one year. The representative may self-nominate for reselection, typically with a maximum term of three consecutive years.
5. Guidance on eligibility is given on P7 below.

### Engagement and Community Building

**Representation:** Faculties/departments/Colleges are encouraged to invite the researcher representative to join relevant faculty/department/college committees. Those with a sufficiently large number of research staff may wish to establish a researcher representative forum to report and be consulted by the appropriate faculty/department/college committee(s) (e.g. Research Committee or equivalent).

**Networking:** Current best practice in supporting these forums suggests that the Faculty/Department/College provides administrative support and a small annual budget to allow research staff to (self-) organise networking, career, and professional development activities.

---

<sup>1</sup> Note that it is the responsibility of the Department/Faculty that a process of nomination and selection *takes place*, but oversight and control of the selection process rests with the research staff in the Department /Faculty.

<sup>2</sup> RSCG(22)13

## Representation within Divisions and Colleges

### Divisional Research Staff Fora

The Faculty/Department Research Staff Representatives within each division will collectively form the [insert name of division] Research Staff Forum. Members of each divisional Research Staff Forum will nominate two of their group to Co-Chair the Forum. The Co-Chairs of each divisional Research Staff Forum will join the Research Staff Consultation Group as the representatives of non-permanent research staff in their division.

**Incentives & Networking:** The Researcher Hub will provide £5k per annum to each of the four academic divisions for the purpose of supporting a sustainable researcher representational structure that promotes community building and researchers' investment in personal, professional, and career development activities<sup>3</sup>. Divisions may elect to provide administrative support and a small annual budget to allow research staff to (self-) organise interdisciplinary networking, career, and professional development activities.

### College Research Staff Forum

The College Research Staff Representatives will collectively form the Colleges Research Staff Forum. Members the Colleges Research Staff Forum will nominate two of their number to Co-Chair the Forum. The Co-Chairs the College Research Staff forum shall join the Research Staff Consultation Group.

### Oxford Research Staff Society (OxRSS)

OxRSS will select two Co-Chairs in accordance with the Society's Terms of Reference. The Co-Chairs of OxRSS will join the Research Staff Consultation Group as representatives of OxRSS and its members.

---

<sup>3</sup> RSSC(23)05.4: Support for activity and/or incentives for Researcher Representatives 2023/24

## Research Staff Consultation Group (RSCG)

The RSCG is a forum for research staff to identify and prioritise themes and measures which will advise and inform the strategy, initiatives, and priorities of the RSSC and the work of the RSWG. RSCG agreed the Role, Objectives, Values, and Commitments of the Group in 2021.<sup>4</sup>

### Membership of RSCG

The RSCG membership will be made up of twelve (minimum) or fifteen (maximum) University Research Staff Representational Fellows.

- Two Co-Chairs of Humanities Research Staff Forum
- Two Co-Chairs of MPLS Research Staff Forum
- Two Co-Chairs of MSD Research Staff Forum
- Two Co-Chairs of SSD Research Staff Forum
- Two Co-Chairs of Colleges Research Staff Forum
- Two Co-Chairs of OxRSS
- One representative from GLAM
- Two Co-Chairs of RSCG may be additional to this number (see next section).

### Two Co-Chairs of RSCG

In MT of each year, RSCG members will nominate and select from their number two Co-Chairs for that academic year. The selection process is:

1. Members with an interest in the role will self-nominate via email to the Secretary of RSCG.
2. If more than two email are received, members of RSCG will vote for their preferred candidates. Voting will be anonymous.

**Note:** While membership of RSCG is a pre-requisite at the time of self-nomination to the position of Co-Chair of RSCG, representation on divisional/college/OxRSS fora in the same academic year as holding the role of Co-Chair of RSCG is not a requirement. For the avoidance of doubt, candidates *may* be divisional/college/OxRSS representatives in the same year as being the Co-Chair of RSCG, but this is *not a requirement* of the Co-Chair position.

### University Researcher Representatives Fellowship

Each member of RSCG will be awarded a University Research Staff Representation Fellowship in recognition of their support of the research staff community. The Fellowships will be funded by the Researcher Hub.

---

<sup>4</sup> RSCG(21)20: RSCG Role, Values, Objectives, and Commitments

## Representation on other University-level Committees and Groups

University-level committees and working groups whose remit will impact on research staff are encouraged to invite a member of the researcher community to join their membership. This is a key route by which the University can realise our aim to “*Enhance the opportunities and support for early-career researchers*”.

Opportunities for research staff representatives on University-level committees and working groups should be brought to the attention of the Secretary to the Research Staff Consultation Group and will be disseminated to all researcher representatives selected by faculties and departments, for cascading to their respective faculty / department research staff fora. Opportunities will also be listed at [Current opportunities to join University Committees and Working Groups as a Researcher Representative | University of Oxford](#).

### The selection process

1. The Secretary to RSCG invites Expressions of Interest (EOIs) from research staff.
2. EOIs will be limited in length (~100 words) and will outline the reasons that the committee is of particular interest.
3. Where more than one EOIs is received, a sub-group of RSCG will select their representative.
4. The selected researcher is appointed for the usual period of tenure for the relevant committee or, if no maximum is established by the committee, for a maximum term of three years.
5. Guidance on eligibility is given on P7 below.

### How representatives will canvas views and provide feedback

Research staff who attend a University-level committee or working group should endeavour to canvas the views of the research staff community and provide feedback of non-confidential information which is particularly relevant to research staff. In order to do this, representatives will:

- Join a termly meeting of all researcher representatives on University-level committees and the Co-Chairs of RSCG.
- Write a blog of all non-confidential decisions and opportunities which are of direct importance to research staff after each committee meeting attended.
- Engage via any relevant faculty/department/college groups and via their informal networks.

## University-level Committees excluded from the above process

To facilitate good communication and in recognition of the role of the Research Staff Consultation Group within the University's committee structure (that is, reporting to Research & Innovation Committee via RSSC), it is proposed that representation on the following committees / groups should be drawn from the membership of Research Staff Consultation Group (RSCG):

- Council
- Research & Innovation Committee
- People Committee
- Research Staff Steering Committee
- Research Staff Working Group

### The selection process

RSCG members with an interest in one or more of the following roles will self-nominate and be selected by RSCG members via the following process:

1. The Secretary to RSCG invites Expressions of Interest (EOIs) from RSCG members.
2. EOIs will be limited in length (~100 words) and outline the reasons that the committee is of particular interest to the researcher.
3. Where more than one EOIs is received, a sub-group of RSCG will select their representative.
4. The selected researcher is appointed for one/two years, with a maximum term of three years.
5. Guidance on eligibility is given below.

**Note:** No member of RSCG should be called upon to sit on more than one of the above groups. Where a sub-group is convened to select a representative, members who have self-nominated for a position will not form part of the sub-group.

## Eligibility

### Eligibility for Faculty/Department/College Representatives

Fixed-term or non-permanent research and teaching staff that are employed by the collegiate University are eligible to put themselves forward as a researcher representative.

For staff who hold two or more contracts of employment, it is an eligibility requirement for at least one to be a fixed-term or non-permanent contract to undertake research or teaching.

While it is good practice for researcher representatives to have a term of one or more years, it is not a requirement that researchers have a fixed-term or non-permanent contract for the term of the position as representative. This is in recognition that researchers and teaching staff are often employed on consecutive fixed-term or non-permanent contracts of employment.

The eligibility criteria for researcher representatives will not impact on definitions of researchers intended for different purposes, such as, the definition of 'researchers' for the purpose of the Concordat for the Career Development of Researchers 2019 or 'early career researchers' for the purpose of Priority 8 of the University's Strategic Plan. Eligibility to join local research staff associations in departments, or membership of OxRSS, are decided locally and are not limited to the eligibility criteria for faculty/department college representatives.

### Eligibility for Representation on University-level Committees

Representatives on University-level committees will be employed by the University, or jointly by the University and a college of the University.

Representatives on committees of the colleges will be employed by one of the colleges, or jointly by the University and a college of the University.