Research Staff Representatives Charter

We provide an informed voice for the research community that can influence University policy and decision making to bring about positive change to work environment, personal & professional development and researcher wellbeing.

Why be a rep?

- Be part of positive change: open-ended contracts for most researchers came about as a result of work by the reps committee
- Develop your skills and career: taking on more involved roles as a rep gives you experience and insight into policy and governance right the way up to university management
- Promotion criteria: being a rep could supply supporting evidence demonstrating readiness for promotion (e.g. under leadership or creating a positive working environment)
- Getting to know people: being a rep allows you to interact with researchers, academics and senior management from across the university

Who do we represent?

The reps committee serves the whole of the research community employed on pathway 2 contracts. Although there is some overlap with issues experienced by pathway 1 staff who are employed to both teach and carry out research, the reps committee approaches problems from the unique perspective of researchers who are predominantly project funded and on insecure contracts. In practice, the majority of the staff we represent are early career researchers (approximately 75% of pathway 2 staff are either Research Associates or Senior Research Associates).

Role description

Reps are expected to engage with researchers within their School, be a visible and active member of the community and engage with School management to represent the views and issues of their research community. Individual reps may take on leadership roles for issues they have a particular interest in.

Things we do

- Act as a point of contact for research staff, facilitating communication
- Engage with research staff to solicit views and opinions (some reps have found organising social events to be an effective means of engaging with staff)
- Meet with other reps from across the University to share issues and best practice
- Keep informed about university matters that affect researchers
- Attend School management and research committees

Things we do not do

- Advise on employment matters
- Represent individuals
- Administration on behalf of Schools

P2 staff with queries that fall outside the scope of the reps role should be directed to an appropriate source of information, which might include line management, HR or a union.
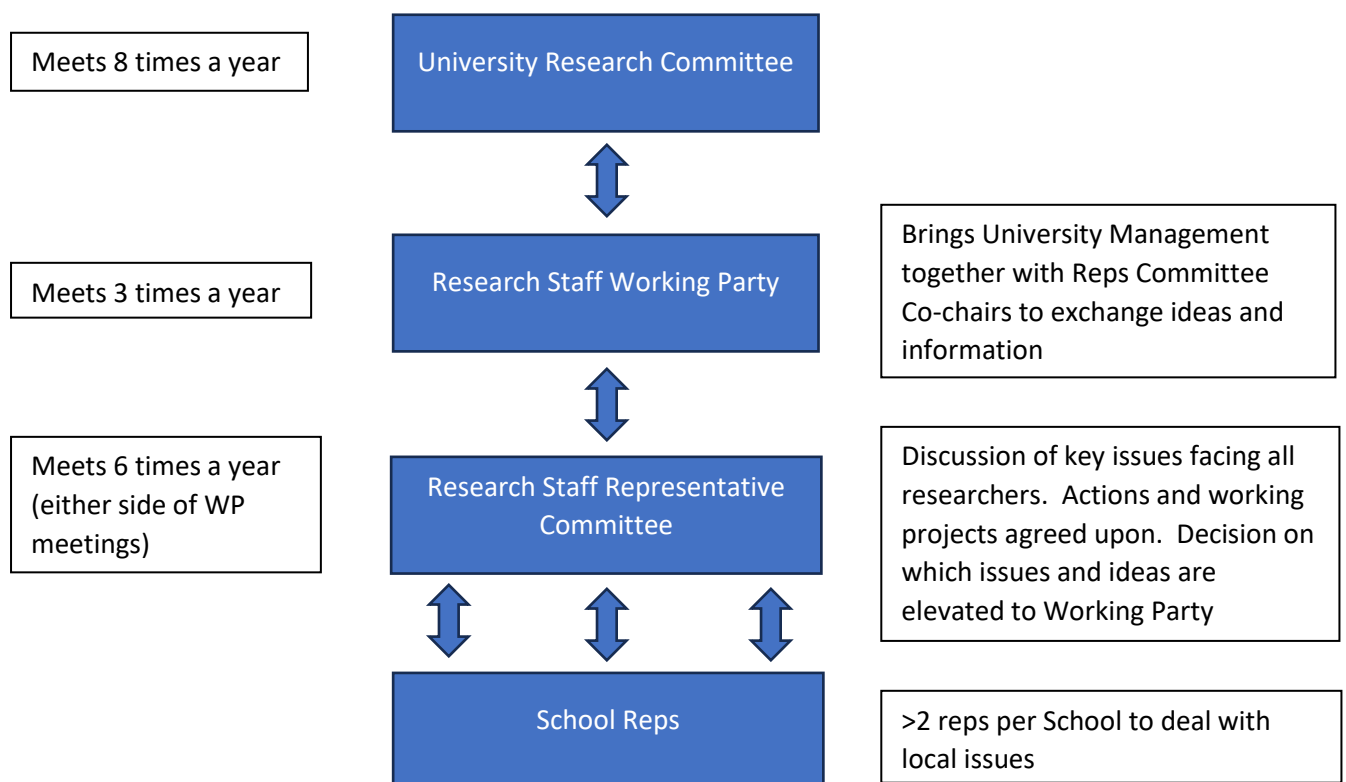
Co-chair role

The committee is led by a small number of co-chairs, who are responsible for

- Chairing reps committee meetings
- Attending Working Party meetings to feed in key information and issues
- Attending other relevant meetings (such as the Research Culture Committee meeting)
- Liaising with Bristol Clear

Research staff representation structure

Across the University, each School has one or more reps who take responsibility at a local level. All reps form part of the Research Staff Representatives Committee (the 'reps committee'). Issues raised at the reps committee are passed to the Research Staff Working Party (RSWP), which is chaired by a faculty research director and attended by Academic Staff Development, Chief of People, PVC-Research, senior academics, and reps committee co-chairs. This facilitates researcher input to policy and decision making and direct communication of new policy and information to researchers. In turn, the Working Party may take issues to the University Research Committee (chaired by the PVC-Research and Enterprise, and attended by senior management and faculty research directors).

Meets 8 times a year	University Research Committee	
Meets 3 times a year	Research Staff Working Party	Brings University Management together with Reps Committee Co-chairs to exchange ideas and information
Meets 6 times a year (either side of WP meetings)	Research Staff Representative Committee	Discussion of key issues facing all researchers. Actions and working projects agreed upon. Decision on which issues and ideas are elevated to Working Party
	School Reps	>2 reps per School to deal with local issues

Relationships

Head of School, Concordat Champions & School Research Director: Research reps provide a voice for researchers and should have access to School Committees and meetings. Reps are encouraged to meet regularly with School management and Concordat Champions to provide researcher input to School matters.

Bristol Clear: Bristol Clear provide professional and personal development for academic research staff. They also provide a small amount of admin support to the reps committee. Bristol Clear work closely with the reps committee and co-chairs to create content that will improve career development opportunities for research staff.

Other reps: Interacting with other reps will allow us to work more effectively and efficiently on the issues relevant to researchers. Reps are encouraged to set up semi-regular meetings with other reps in their school.

Communication

Documentation, including meeting minutes, key documents and reps lists, is stored on Sharepoint, and can be accessed through the reps Microsoft Teams Group. Teams also hosts a message board and chat function that can be used to discuss issues among the reps. The reps committee as a whole can be contacted (sparingly!) by email at grp-researchreps@groups.bristol.ac.uk.

In addition, reps meet at least 6 times a year either virtually or in person, either side of Working Party meetings.

Outward-facing information can be found here:
http://www.bristol.ac.uk/staffdevelopment/academic/researchstaffhub/research-staff-reps/.

Starting as a rep

You will have received this document because you have been approached to become, or expressed an interest in becoming, a rep. Existing reps in your School will be able to help you get up to speed with ongoing projects/campaigns at both University and School level.

Once you have decided to become a rep, please make yourself known to the co-chairs, who will add you to the Teams group. Please also provide a photo and contact details to the Bristol Clear admin team (bristol-clear@bristol.ac.uk).

You will find a lot of information on Teams – dive in and familiarise yourself with what has happened to date. If you have any questions, feel free to approach one of the co-chairs, or a fellow rep.

Stepping down

If you are stepping down as a representative, please could you make sure the co-chairs and Bristol Clear admin team are informed. Please also do your best to identify a possible replacement and act as a point of reference.

April 2024 (review date April 2025)