



A Guide for Postgraduate Student Representatives



CONTENTS

Table of Contents

CONTENTS.....	2
About CAPA.....	3
Welcome to the Wonderful World of Committees!.....	4
Meetings, Bloody Meetings.....	6
Twenty Arguments Against Any Proposal.....	10
Tips on Reading Committee Papers.....	12
How an Idea Becomes University Policy.....	14
CAPA Resources for Postgrad Reps.....	16
CAPA National Representation.....	17
Handover Notes.....	18

About CAPA

The Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations (CAPA), is the peak body representing the interests of Australia's 270,449 postgraduate students. Founded in 1979, CAPA is a membership-based non-profit organisation. CAPA's member organisations include 33 postgraduate associations, and the National Indigenous Postgraduate Association Aboriginal Corporation (NIPAAC).

An elected Executive Committee governs CAPA, supported by Regional and Equity Standing Committees. Details for elected Office Bearers and Staff can be found at <http://www.capa.edu.au/representation/national>

Local Representation

Information, support and advice are provided to individual postgraduates by CAPA's affiliated member organisations on university campuses in each state and territory. CAPA's members also elect regional representatives to assist in coordinating activities and information sharing between postgraduate associations.

Welcome to the Wonderful World of Committees!

Whether your university is big or small, it will inevitably have a complex array of structures to govern and manage it. At every university, there will be great diversity in the opinions expressed on committees, and as such, there is always a range of possible outcomes. Every major decision made at a university will be discussed on a committee somewhere, and those affecting students must be discussed at committees with student representation, which is why our jobs are so important!

I'm pretty busy – why should I read this book?

You made the leap, agreed to become a rep, and now might like to have a think about what the job does and can entail. So firstly, we've pulled together a few resources to help guide you in being an effective rep on committees. Next, there is some information about CAPA, including a brief overview of our policies and structure. The final page is there to help you ensure that your faculty, school or department reps maintain good contact with your local postgrad association and CAPA even when you leave, so that all of us can continue to be well represented from the departmental to the national level.

People are here to help you and you are here to help people!

It's terribly important to remember that as a rep, you are not alone. There are plenty of people you can contact for help or advice – your first point of contact will usually be your local postgrad association. If you don't have a local association, why not get connected to other postgrad reps on your campus and start one yourself? CAPA can help by providing you with a generic constitution, examples of funding agreements with universities, and ideas of social events you might like to host for the postgrad community, among other resources.

One important aspect of being a student rep is to report to the people you're representing, as well as to solicit their views to take to committees. Whether it's via a departmental postgrad committee or email updates, make sure you stay in contact with your cohort.

CAPA Reps Discussion Lists

If you have a question or area of concern that you think may benefit from discussion by a wider group of reps, ask your local postgrad association whether they maintain any such list. You can also subscribe to any of CAPA's discussion lists on the CAPA website at:

<http://www.capa.edu.au/og>

CAPA maintains the following such groups:

- CAPA Casuals
- CAPA ECR Network
- CAPA Higher Education Research Open Network
- News - Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences news for postgrads
- News - Science and technology news for postgrads
- Postgrads - Indigenous
- Postgrads - International
- Postgrads - Queer
- Postgrads - Women

- Postgraduate Disability Network
- Region - Eastern (NSW and ACT)
- Region - Northern (QLD and NT)
- Region - South Eastern (VIC and TAS)
- Region - Southern (SA)
- Region - Western (WA)

Meetings, Bloody Meetings¹

A guide for student representatives on institutional committees

Orientation

You have just been appointed or elected to a committee at your institution.

- Find out who the *secretary* of the committee is and contact them.
 - *Introduce yourself.* Committee secretaries can be a valuable source of information.
 - Give your *address* for the papers. If this is a pigeonhole at your student organisation's office, check it regularly.
 - Find out *where* the committee meets and *when*. Write the dates in your diary for the entire year.
- Find out where the committee fits in your institution's structure:
 - What is its formal relationship with other committees, above, below & laterally?
 - What is the normal 'approval track'?
 - Does the committee advise, recommend or decide?
 - Is there a difference between theory and practice, formal & informal structures?

Preparation

The meeting papers arrive (if they don't, find out why).

- *Read the papers carefully.* One approach is to skim first, then go through carefully, making notes.
- Work out the *important issues*.
- Liaise with:
 - the other student reps (if any) on the committee. Whatever your normal political or personal differences may be, you will normally be united in your position on issues affecting students. One approach is to organise a regular time to get together before meetings.
 - The student reps on other committees. Has the issue been discussed elsewhere already? Is it going to come up somewhere else? Is this part of a more general push by the admin? Regular or ad hoc meetings of all student reps can be a good idea.
 - The President of the postgrad association or its Education Officers - these people may have an overall perspective on what is going on, as well as being able to provide advice or suggest a 'line'.
 - The Postgraduate Advocate (or equivalent) - they may already have done some work on the issue or know the background. Perhaps a submission would be appropriate.

¹ This section is based on notes on the workshop given by Tony Lang at the Australian Union of Students Student Representation conference, Camp Eureka, Saturday 26 March 1983. Some things are truly timeless.

- Find out what the *background* is:
 - See the committee secretary or, if you know the chair already, see them. They may be able (and willing) to explain. There may well be a 'hidden agenda'.
 - Get copies of previous minutes, reports, submissions, etc from your organisation's files or the committee secretary. These may provide useful information on the background and possible arguments for and against the proposal.
 - Does your organisation have a *policy* on the issue? If not, should it? Get an appropriate motion passed. It might be an idea to organise a general meeting to discuss the matter.
- *Lobby* the other members of the committee, especially the chair. Work out who is already sympathetic and who may be able to be convinced. Personal contact is better than phone, inviting someone out to lunch is best of all. Frame your approach according to the person involved. If the issue is important, it's worth schmarming over.

The meeting

- If you simply can't make it:
 - Inform the other student reps.
 - See if you can nominate a proxy (sometimes not possible under the institution's rules).
 - Send an apology (preferably an email giving a convincing reason).
- *Arrive on time:*
 - In fact, arrive five minutes early. Chat to the other members. Once again, schmooze. Introduce yourself to any new members.
 - For the first meeting, arrive even earlier. Introduce yourself to everyone, especially the chair. Memorise people's names & positions.
- *Dress sensibly.* There is no need to go formal or anything, but look respectable. You're out to win – turning up unwashed in bare feet and overalls won't help.
- Choose your *seat* carefully:
 - Make sure you sit where you can be seen by the chair (and other members). Some chairs will try to ignore the student reps.
 - Sit next to your chief antagonist. It's very hard to knife someone sitting next to you. In fact some of the venom will probably end up being directed at some other member of the committee across the table (or the chair) who will not appreciate it.
 - Sit away from other student reps. You don't want to look like a caucus or a single bloc. If you've done your preparation properly, you won't need to communicate during the meeting.
 - This is a general rule, however. In some circumstances, especially when you don't know what is likely to happen, it may be better to sit next to each other so that

you can whisper or pass notes (very) surreptitiously. (These days, you can do this on your mobile anyway, as long as you're discreet.)

- Find out everyone's *names*. As people are referred to, jot down their names and if possible titles or positions. Refer to previous speakers by name. Note their attitudes to various issues, i.e. their politics. Drawing up a chart of seating around the table can be useful. Brief new reps on all of this before the meeting if you are an old hack.
 - It's hard to know what to call the Chair. Using 'Chair' or the position, e.g. 'Vice-Chancellor' or 'Dean', may be okay. Some committees simply use the Chair's first name. Note what others do and follow suit.
- Throw *your meeting procedure* out the window. Most committees operate on 'consensus' and an actual vote is rarely taken. The average committee chair wouldn't know a procedural motion if one hit them. Points of order and other CAPA ACM-style tactics are usually totally inappropriate. Don't be a smart arse, exploit consensus to your advantage. Refuse to agree and keep arguing as long as possible – they may give in simply so that there is no dissension.
- If the issue is *referred* to a working group or subcommittee, try to get a student on it. Contentious matters are often referred in this way and the working group will have access to all the material and make the real decision which will simply be ratified by the parent body.

Tactics

- *Exploit the consensus approach*. Make it clear that you will only accept the proposal and shut up if it is substantially modified. If they won't come at this, and the proposal is carried without any concessions, it may be appropriate to ask to have your dissent recorded in the minutes. They won't like this.
- *Let them speak first*:
 - Find out what the arguments are and who is lining up to support the proposal.
 - Hope that some on-side academic will support you – wait to see if this is going to happen.
 - Once you know how the land lies, then speak, picking up points made for and against by other speakers.
 - Make sure that there is someone left (eg. another student rep or preferably an academic) to support your position at the end of the debate. The last speech is the most important.
- *Argue rationally and reasonably*. Make sure your arguments are logically presented. Emotion and in particular anger is rarely appropriate, as are threats (eg. of demos, etc). Once again, this is a general rule – depending on the circumstance and any personal interest you may have, a bit of passion may be most effective.
- If you *haven't read the papers*, be very careful. You have committed the cardinal sin. Shut up and listen. Make sure no-one can turn around and say 'if you refer to p.76 of the report...'. Egg on the face is never pleasant and could be very damaging to the student cause.
- *Divide and conquer*:

- Exploit personal antagonisms between committee members or towards other people associated with the proposal. Label it the 'J--- Proposal' (intensely disliked academic) or emphasise that the notorious Professor H--- has supported it at the committee.
- Exploit other divisions such as faculties, schools or departments versus central admin., academic versus bureaucrats, junior academics versus senior academics, education versus finance, etc. There may be traditional rivalries or knee-jerk reactions which you can use to advantage.
- *Deferral.* If it looks like you haven't got the numbers, or it's uncertain and some members need to be lobbied, or you need to stall for any other reason (e.g. to orchestrate a public outcry or mass protest, etc), then try to get the issue deferred:
 - for consultation so that all interested groups can give their views;
 - for consideration by another (and more sympathetic) committee which may be affected;
 - so that the legal, financial or administrative aspects can be investigated (and found to preclude implementation of the proposal);
 - to obtain more information generally (which goes against the proposal).
- *The perfect compromise.* If the debate has dragged on for hours without resolution, come up with a reworded motion that appears to be a compromise, but naturally is biased in your favour. In their desire to get on with the rest of the agenda, they may seize on it and put it through.
- *The old one-two.* This is a good general manoeuvre. One student rep takes a hard-line position and the other comes in with a softer, more acceptable line much later in the debate. In order to achieve the beloved consensus this may be carried.
- *Play dumb.* Where there's a hidden agenda and no-one is prepared to say the obvious, but the overt arguments are going the other way, a line like, 'Excuse me, but isn't such and such the case?' may be greeted with embarrassment, but secret relief.
- *Take notes.* This is the most important. Who said what & exactly how? Quotes can be used in articles in your student paper, etc, minutes can be queried if they are not accurate, and generally you will be able to refresh your memory later on. You will also find your reports to your constituents easier to write. If the issue comes up again years later, your notes will be immensely useful to your successors.

After the meeting

- *File your papers* carefully. Keep them in the student organisation's office, so that they are readily accessible to other student reps. Properly labelled lever-arch files are a good idea.
- *Report back* to all the people you liaised with before the meeting, so that everyone knows what is going on. Once again, meetings of all the student reps can be a useful forum.
- *Follow up issues* with the academics and bureaucrats concerned, so that you know the guarantees or concessions promised are actually being adhered to.

- *Write an article* for your student paper. If you lost and it's important, let your constituency (the student body) know about it. Maybe it is time to storm the admin building.

General issues

- Committees are not 'political'. The theory is that all members are only concerned with what is best for the institution and that no-one is motivated by internal or broader political considerations. Pretend this is the case by using words such as 'major policy issue' or 'different approach' or 'matter of academic principle'.
- Don't just take a position on 'student issues'. Obviously some issues are of more direct concern to students than others, and you should definitely express views on these. However, by understanding issues in which you have no direct stake and taking a position on them, you gain credibility (and perhaps create obligations) for when a 'student issue' comes up. You will be seen as a full member of the committee, not just a student rep.
- *The fireman's case*. This is a complex subject, but the broad principles need to be understood as the case may be used against you. In 1979 the NSW Court of appeal decided that members of committees once elected were members in their own right and should not be considered to be delegates of their constituency. Representatives could therefore not be bound by decisions of the body that elected and forced to vote contrary to their own personal views. The decision has not yet been followed by other states and is hence legally only 'persuasive' in NSW. It is, however, used by some institutions to try to prevent representatives from presenting a sectional viewpoint: 'you are not here as a student representative, Mr Lang, you are here as a member of the committee and like any other member should place the good of the whole institution above the interests of students, even though they elected you'. This was not decided in the case and is obviously nonsense. You are accountable both morally and politically to the student body, and while the student organisation may not be able to bind you to a particular position on an issue, and you can undoubtedly vote for a proposal which benefits the institution at the expense of students, you are equally free to vote against the proposal on the grounds that it harms the group you represent.
- *Success rate*. A final word. You may well find that you win only one issue in ten and that you are constantly getting stomped on. Try not to be discouraged. You are gaining access to information (which is power) and if you weren't there, you wouldn't even win that 10% of battles.

Twenty Arguments Against Any Proposal

With notes and counter-arguments

By Tony Lang

1. *It's been tried before* (and it didn't work): The oldest argument in the book. 'Before' will always be before you were a member of the body and probably before you were born.

'Things have changed since 1853.' or 'There is no harm in trying again.'

2. *It's never been done before:* Just as often used by the radical left as the conservative right. Usually disguised by the use of any of arguments 9-14.

3. *It's out of scope:* It's not within the body's statement of objectives or terms of reference. Even better if no one has a copy of these.

'For which committee is it in scope?' or 'Well, perhaps I'll just take it to Academic Board.'

4. *It will cost too much:* The treasurer's favourite argument. 'Too much' will always be slightly more than the body can afford. Establish that the matter is a priority and co-opt the treasurer into the process, getting them to find the fat in the budget.

5. *To do this, we'll have to kill the sacred cow:* The Washington monument argument; basically a more sophisticated version of 4. Sacred cows are usually also red herrings.

6. *I can't see this item on the agenda:* Usually from the person who drew up the agenda.

'Oh, don't be so bureaucratic!' or 'Then surely it fits under Other Business.'

7. *Isn't that already being dealt with by committee X?* Where you have no representation on committee X. If committee X wasn't, it certainly will now. Try for a joint working group.

8. *Isn't this rather a waste of everybody's time?* Invariably from the person who has just spent an hour discussing the petty cash expenditure.

'Well then, it'll only take a minute to discuss.'

9. *This is such a complex proposal, we need to establish a subcommittee:* On which you won't be represented and which can bury the issue. If it is referred, make sure you are appointed to the subcommittee.

'It's not that difficult really. Perhaps I could go through the arguments again.'

10. *We need more information. Perhaps you could prepare a paper:* A more short-term delaying tactic than 9, but similar in purpose. Supply the information there and then.

11. *I think we need to look at this in a broader context:* The classic method of introducing red herrings.

12. *This is fine in principle, but the practical difficulties are insurmountable:* Used when they are losing the principle debate. Deal with the 'difficulties' one by one.

13. *What about the legal implications?* Another lawyer's favourite, used when no one else on the body has any legal training. Lawyers can always argue both sides of any question.
- 'This is most worrying. Perhaps you can advise us how to get around the problem.'
- Another version is 'what about the industrial implications?'
14. *This raises important questions of principles. We should establish a policy first.* Usually used in combination with 9, 10 and 11. Use your proposal to establish the principles, then apply them.
15. *It's too late (soon) to do anything about that now:* Used when they have pulled (or are about to pull) a rort. Pull out the righteous indignation stop & (re)open the debate.
16. *Don't be so bureaucratic. This is a policy committee*(or vice versa): Used when you are raising practical difficulty with an unworkable proposal (or trying to establish an important matter of principle).
17. *Perhaps Professor X would care to comment:* Where Professor X is the resident 'expert', implacably opposed to the proposal. No one likes resident experts. Enlist the ordinary members of the body's sympathy.
18. *This is contrary to the fundamental tenets of our faith:* 'Our faith' is whatever brand of dogma you are supposed to be espousing. Usually used to intimidate less experienced members. Is this true? If so, does it matter? Maybe you should be joining a less dogmatic group.
19. *The members won't wear it:* Particularly useful when there is no way of telling what the members actually think.
- 'I thought we represented the members.'
20. *Talk is cheap. Let's do something:* 'Something' will be some form of direct action designed to assuage the consciences of those present. Only used when they are losing the debate. Will anything useful be achieved by the action proposed?

Tips on Reading Committee Papers²

1. Do not be intimidated by reams of paper.

² This version based on an original by Hoa Pham at the University of Melbourne Postgraduate Association, revised by Tammi Jonas.

Usually committee representatives are sent an agenda, the attachments to the items, and the minutes from the last meeting, approximately a week before each meeting (hopefully). If you are on a committee that receives reports from other working groups or committees these items can be quite bulky. But like all readings, you can skim some parts and skip others.

2. Essential reading:

Read the agenda for the meeting you are about to attend. The asterisked items are those that are definitely going to be discussed at the meeting. If there are agenda items that you have concerns about or that your postgrad association may have a position on, read the attachment with the item, and, if the issue was mentioned in the previous meeting, in the minutes for that meeting. Be prepared to 'star' any items that aren't automatically starred before adopting the agenda.

It is important to note that motions written into an agenda that *have not been starred* are subject to being passed en masse at the end of the meeting, consensus assumed. Make sure you read every motion in the papers, as some are sleepers – there may or may not be an intent to slide something past people (usually not), but you never know when they're either trying to push something through quickly or just haven't noticed a substantial population of students who may be disadvantaged by the result. That is, *read all the motions in your papers!*

3. How to decide what to read and what to skim.

Look for items that are concerns for postgraduate students. Currently look for phrases such as:

'department resources' – CAPA is concerned about how resources are allocated to postgraduate students. This includes desk space, scholarships, printing allowances, access to computers, etc. You can see CAPA's Statement on Minimum Resources at <http://www.capa.edu.au/briefing-papers/2004/statement-minimum-resources>

'student progress/programs' – any item that include these words may require closer inspection. The withdrawal/completion rates of students, and the degree programs that are being introduced by the university can be of concern. Look for words such as 'accreditation' and 'credit'.

'budget' – the attachment to items such as this usually look quite intimidating. However if you persevere you may find interesting points – such as how much your department is spending on capital works (space) and grants to students.

'intellectual property' – this is an ongoing area of concern and you may wish to look at the CAPA website for more information if this appears in your papers.

'fees' – there are a number of fees that need close watching. Watch for ancillary fees for things that you would reasonably expect to be provided as part of your course of study.

'supervision' – this may be hiding under the item about staff/student load or staff workloads.

Any sentence with 'policy' and 'student' included!

Do look at the titles of the working groups and committees that report to the committee you are on. The university often refers real work or change to working groups that offer recommendations to committees.

4. There's something I need to clarify/dispute/question in these papers. What do I do?

If the item is asterisked, it will be discussed in the meeting. If it is at the end of the agenda and the meeting is accustomed to going over time or not getting through the agenda it may be deferred.

If the item is not asterisked you can: ask to have it starred, bring it up in 'general business' if it slipped past you, or contact the chair or secretary of the committee beforehand and inform them that you would like to have an item discussed.

Look at who is the author of the relevant attachments – if it is someone you know you could ask them directly before hand if necessary.

5. What if there is something I want to bring to the committee to discuss?

You will need to table it with the secretary of the committee at least a week and a bit before hand to be part of the agenda items. On some committees there is room for student reports, on others you would need to ask for it to be put on the agenda. Include any paperwork that might accompany it. You will have to work out what you would like the committee to do with it (item for information, discussion or action).

How an Idea Becomes University Policy

An idea becomes policy when the people who count are convinced to make it happen. How to get those people to adopt your ideas is what this section is about.

Thinking your idea as a 'policy idea'

- A policy is to make something happen, or to make it happen a certain way.
- A 'policy idea' is clear about its objectives.
- A 'policy idea' is clear about how the means will achieve the ends.
- A 'policy idea' is clear about any undesirable consequences it might cause and about how they can be avoided.
- A 'policy idea' is clear about who is responsible for implementation, and who is accountable for seeing its objectives achieved.

Getting support for your idea

- Consult with your constituents to ensure they want the policy.
- Find out who you need to convince before your idea can be a policy.
- Find out what it will take to convince them of the merits of your policy idea – usually the best way is to ask people directly.
- Once you think they are interested, consult actively – give them a written copy of your policy idea and ask for suggestions.

Drafting policy

- Make sure the policy will actually achieve what it sets out to.
- Think about who will implement the policy – are they up to the job?
- Does the policy contain rewards or penalties of any sort – are they fair, and are their incentives or disincentives well aimed?
- What harm will the policy do? All policies do some amount of harm; it is important to try imagine every harmful possibility and then see if the harm can be reduced.

Getting the policy adopted

- **Lobby** – if you want a policy to happen, lobby for it outside the meeting. Contact committee members and ask them if they will vote for it. If they will not, ask what it would take to get their support. Usually a careful amendment is enough to satisfy any problem of detail.
- **Target opinion leaders** – ensuring that your policy idea has the support of influential committee members is tactically smart, prioritise contacting potential allies who are widely respected.
- **Speak up** – make sure you and your allies are prepared to explain the policy idea when you get to the meeting, many policy ideas die because their authors go quiet.
- **Turn up** – make sure you and your allies are present when the vote is taken.
- **Follow up** – if your policy idea needs to be ratified by a different committee, make sure you lobby them too. Best to contact a postgraduate student representative on that committee and explain the situation to them; then they can do the lobbying work for your idea.

Once your idea is policy

- **Implementation** – it is all too common for good policies to be implemented poorly or not at all. If you have taken the trouble to achieve a policy, it is worth checking from time to time to see how well it is being implemented. Contact the people who are accountable for implementing your policy and ask whether they are doing their job. If you feel uncomfortable confronting someone directly, you can get your postgrad association's president to ask.
- **Safeguarding** – if your policy is an important achievement, you do not want it rescinded or made ineffective after you have gone. To safeguard against 'clawback', it is wise to ensure your colleagues and any successors in your post understand what you have achieved. Reporting your achievement to your postgrad association can be an important way of retaining institutional memory for this purpose.

CAPA Resources for Postgrad Reps

CAPA Advice & Support

- The President, Vice-President (National Operations) and Vice-President (Equity) are your first points of contact questions about representation.

CAPA Policy

- You may like to refer to CAPA policies or positions on particular issues. You can find our policy and previous reports and discussion, briefing and position papers on the website: <http://www.capa.edu.au>

CAPA Publications

- CAPA attempts to keep current issues, events and topics of interest updated on our website: <http://www.capa.edu.au>

Resources for CAPA Affiliates

CAPA tries to keep a current collection of affiliates' publications, calendars and other resources. On the CAPA website at <http://www.capa.edu.au/resources>, you'll find the following information:

- Postgraduate conferences
- Postgraduate handbooks and survival guides
- Regular postgraduate publications, including magazines, newsletters and updates
- Resources for providing advocacy, grievance resolution and advice
- Seminars, social events, awards and other activities

Finally, Good Luck!!

It can seem overwhelming to be the lone student voice on a university committee. But just remember that without you there, providing information to students in your area, other reps, your postgrad association and CAPA, as well as back to the committee, there would be no student voice in your university's decision-making process, let alone at the level of government. What we've learned at CAPA is that postgrad reps are generally well respected on committees, and that our voice does, indeed, make a difference for us all. Recognise what an opportunity you have and make the most of your time on committees – just think how long the staff there have waited to hold a position on such important bodies!

CAPA National Representation

Full details of CAPA's representative structure and office bearers' contact details can be found on the website at: <http://www.capa.edu.au/representation/national>

The **CAPA Executive** is comprised of the President (chair), Vice President (National Operations), Vice President (Equity), National Secretary, Treasurer, and a nominee of both the Equity Committee and the National Operations Committee.

The **Equity Committee** makes recommendations to the Executive on all equal representation and equity matters. This Committee is comprised of the CAPA President, Vice President (Equity) and National Secretary, the Equity Officers (Women's, Indigenous, Queer, Disability and International), and a member of staff. The Equity Committee nominates one of their members to serve on the CAPA Executive.

The **National Operations Committee (NOC)** makes recommendations to the Executive on all regional and affiliate-specific matters, on membership and recruitment, and on CAPA's short and long-term planning and strategic needs. The NOC is comprised of the CAPA President and Vice President (National Operations) (chair), the NIPAAC President, the CAPA Regional Secretaries, and a member of staff.

CAPA employs staff to help it fulfil its duties as the representative body for postgraduate students in Australia. The staff work from the CAPA office in Victorian Trades Hall in Melbourne. CAPA's staff work under the direction of the President. CAPA also has the services of external contractors - bookkeeping /accounting services and IT consultants.

Handover Notes

So you've served your term, neglected your study, passionately represented postgrads on a number of issues, and now you're looking forward to a break. What should you do when a new rep is elected? Here are a few ideas about the main things to include in the handover process:

- Notify your postgrad association of the change of reps, even if you aren't officially affiliated with them.
- Unsubscribe from any representatives' lists you'd like to and tell your replacement how to subscribe.
- Pass on all relevant committee papers or policy documents to the new rep. Spend some time talking through what happened and what was important over the past year.
- Give your replacement some sort of explanation (preferably written) of the key dates and events for the year (eg. How often committees meet, departmental barbecues, etc).
- Inform the committee secretary for each of your committees of the change of rep and pass on the new rep's contact details.
- Explain the method you've used of reporting to your constituents (eg. mass emails, a website, etc).
- Introduce the new rep to key staff in your department/school or faculty (esp. student support staff).
- Wish your successor well and get back to working on your degree!