

## minutes

Meeting:	Postgraduate Committee
Date:	9 <sup>th</sup> November 2018
Paper:	Postgraduate Committee Autumn 18 – 3 (PGCA437)
Author:	Alexandros Efstratiou
Purpose:	Record of Decision Making

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### Minutes of the Postgraduate Committee 9<sup>th</sup> November 2018

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**Committee members present:** Oli Gray (Activities and Opportunities Officer), Sophie Atherton (Campaigns and Democracy Officer), Georgina Burchell (Welfare, Community and Diversity Officer), Rob Klim (Ethical Issues Officer) James McLean (AMA)

**Chair:** Charlotte Hallahan (LDC)

**Apologies:** Martin Marko (Postgraduate Education Officer), Andrea James (AMA), Anush Rajagopal (LAW), Saket Jalan (NBS)

**In attendance:** Josh Melling (Student Engagement Coordinator – PG), Alexandros Efstratiou (Advocacy Assistant)

## **PGCA437 Statement from the Chair**

- CH states that they will be chairing in AJ's place, as deputy chair.
- CH states that the meeting is not quorate and therefore the aim will be discussion. If the committee feels that some matters must be voted on, they can be put through Teams.

## **PGCA438 Minutes of the Last Meeting**

- JM clarifies that minutes cannot be voted on as the meeting is not quorate, however any issues with the minutes can still be pointed out.
- OG states that they have a few questions on points in which their name was mentioned. On the point about the Activities and Opportunities Officer compiling a report about induction events, they clarify that the report they are producing is on the training of committees, chairs, student and career staff to ensure consistency. They ask whether they should be producing a report on something else.
- JM states that they believe this pertained to academic inductions.
- OG questions the use of the specific word "events".
- SA states that, the way they understood it, this point referred to the report that OG mentioned and that there was no additional work that has to be done by the Activities and Opportunities Officer, as the report has already been compiled.
- OG requests a further clarification on a point that stated that they have notes on grant caps. They state that they are unsure about what those notes are, however they would be happy to look into the processes used for societies and sports clubs in terms of caps on the grants given.
- CH explains that what was being discussed at the last meeting was how strict the caps for grants are, and whether the committee would be able to go over the cap in some situations.
- OG states that there are no numerical caps for sports club grants and social grants, however there is a total pot for these grants. They further explain that they can do further research on this.
- JML states that they personally do not believe there is a need for caps, since the reason that the committee exists is to use its judgment to make such decisions without being mediated by bounds.
- OG states that, in their experience, not having a cap has never been a problem.
- CH asks OG whether they believe it is a good idea not to have a cap.
- OG states that context is more important, for example in making people aware of what a reasonable amount to ask for would be, and what the total pot for grants is.
- JM explains that last year committee used the £300 cap as guiding point rather than an absolute cap, and they therefore

approved grants that were both above and below £300, depending on the application's merit.

-JML states that some committee members felt that a cap would allow the committee to keep a better track and manage spending, while some other members felt that this is the reason that the committee exists, and no cap is needed to manage funds. They further state that a good way of dealing with this and finding something that everybody is comfortable with is to utilise Teams.

-CH states that there should be a discussion about this in the next committee meeting so that the matter may be voted on, explaining that the meaning of the cap at the moment is quite confusing.

-JM inquires whether CH would like this as an agenda item for the next committee, or as a voting point in Teams.

-The committee concurs to put this through Teams. JML adds that debate on this would not substantially change anything.

## **PGCA439 Action Log**

-CH briefly outlines the action points that arose from the last meeting, and who suggested them.

-SA states that they have not yet had time to liaise with the relevant staff members about their action point.

-OG asks for a clarification on whether this action point was about chair training. SA confirms this, and states that it pertains to chair training around procedural motions and similar things.

-In MM's absence, JM showcases some of the work that the marketing team have produced for advertising. They explain that these materials can be used in the Scholars Bar and social media. They also state that further material is being produced, particularly on what pg(su) is and how postgraduates can utilise their spaces to the maximum potential.

-JML suggests that it would be worthwhile creating an initial point of contact that postgraduate students can interact with, for example a shared inbox that students can be signposted to through marketing material.

-JM states that this would be a good idea. They explain that, historically, the initial point of contact has been the Postgraduate Education Officer's e-mail, however JM has also put their own e-mail throughout some postgraduate spaces, resulting in quite a lot of e-mails from postgraduate students, which shouldn't necessarily be happening.

-JML states that if the Postgraduate Education Officer is meant to be the first point of contact, then their e-mail should be signposted to.

-JM states that the possibility of a shared inbox to which staff members of the postgraduate(su) have access to can be discussed.

-OG concurs to the idea of a shared inbox, as only having the officer's e-mail can cause problems when the officer leaves office and is replaced by the next one.

-JM asks whether the committee would like to put this through Teams, as no voting can be held at the present meeting. The committee concurs.

#### **PGCA440 Assembly Discussion Items**

-CH explains that a large proportion of the discussion at the last assembly concerned mending the trust of the Postgraduate Committee towards the Postgraduate Education Officer, and mending the divide that was caused between PGR and PGT students.

-SA requests a clarification on an arising action point about training committee members, assembly chair and the Postgraduate Education Officer on policies and main aims of pg(su). AE clarifies that this does not pertain to SA, and they do not need to take action additional to the chair training.

-CH explains that one of the points that arose was for MM to apologise to Union Council, and to put their apologies through the Committee via Teams first. They further explain that MM has not yet submitted their apology, as they communicated that they did not have time. CH expresses their wishes for this to be put in for the next Union Council.

-The committee concurs on utilising some channels to prompt the Postgraduate Education Officer to send their apology through.

-JML states that the officer's apology at assembly was very confusing, as they maintained the PGR/PGT dichotomy. They further explain that some members of last year's committee were present at the assembly to prompt the discussion, and that there is still some uncertainty as to why the Postgraduate Education Officer wanted to keep the motion from being disclosed until the assembly meeting.

-CH states that, despite it being quite a heated assembly, it was productive in that ways to bridge the divide between PGRs and PGTs were identified going forward. They further state that they, as committee members, needed some reassurance that they would not be ignored or undercut again.

-On the point about a potential investigation on the previous assembly being conspiratorial, JML explains that the officer was quite obscure in their statements as to their motivations for the motion and the specific issues that were affecting them, which made them refrain from making the motion public prior to the assembly. They further explain that the entire vote seemed odd and conspiratorial.

-CH explains that the overall arising point was that MM needs to have more discussions with students who will potentially be affected by their decisions, via focus groups or otherwise. They further state that MM seemed willing to take this forward.

-CH raises another point on making the assembly more accessible to PGRs by ways of restructuring the pg(su) website. AE explains that this point has now been acted upon.

-CH further states that a member of assembly suggested holding an event with the sole purpose of facilitating discussion between PGRs and PGTs. They ask for any further comments from the committee on the assembly.

-SA requests a clarification on an action point arising about training, stating that they were under the pretence that this training would be for chairs only; however, the point states that the whole of committee would also have to be trained.

-AE explains that this is a point separate to the chair training which will be led on by the Campaigns and Democracy Officer. This point will need to be led on by pg(su) staff, and will aim at familiarising everyone involved with pg(su) on its main aims and policies pertaining to it.

**PGCA441 PG Social to be held in November**

-AR not present to raise the item. Item moved to the agenda for next committee.

**PGCA442 Acting on Improving Advertising**

-Item partially discussed in item PGCA439. AR not present to raise further points. Item moved to the agenda for next committee.

**PGCA443 Postgraduate Education Officer Union Council Report**

-MM not present to raise the item.

**PGCA444 Postgraduate Education Officer 'Workbook'**

-JM explains that the Postgraduate Education Officer asked them to show their Workbook to the committee. They proceed to present this.

-There is some confusion expressed from the committee about what this is.

-SA believes that this is MM's calendar.

-GB explains that this has come out of conversations on how much time the full-time officers are spending on different tasks. They further explain that a member of staff was helping the FTOs determine how much time to spend on their tasks, and they believe that MM took this quite literally. The FTOs present state that they have not created a Workbook themselves.

-SA states that the committee should communicate to MM that a Workbook is not necessary, and that their Union Council Report should be sufficient to present to committee.

-JM explains that MM wanted to bring this as a standing item to keep the committee updated on their work at every meeting.

-OG states that, while it is appreciated that the Postgraduate Education Officer is making so much effort for transparency, they believe it is not necessary if it is creating a lot of extra workload.

- JML concurs, and states that the committee is not there to stand in the way of how the Postgraduate Education Officer works. They add that, as long as the officer is doing their job, then this level of transparency would not be necessary.
- OG states that the committee could ask MM for clarification on why they feel this is necessary. If this is only for the sake of transparency, they advise communicating to MM that the committee does not believe this is necessary.

**PGCA445 Social Grant funding being intertwined with PGSU Agenda**

- CH introduces the item, and explains that it pertains to how social grant applications are voted on.
- JM explains that, when the social grant was first introduced, this was an item in the agenda, and committee would then go through each application they received. They further explain that, the reason that voting was moved to Teams was that if an application was submitted too close to the date of the committee, then the applicants would have to wait for long periods of time before hearing back, which could mean that they would lose windows in which they could run their events. JM clarifies that this is simply some contextual information, and MM's suggestion is to move social grant voting back to the agenda.
- CH expresses a concern that this would take a lot of time out of committee meetings.
- GB expresses some frustration with Teams, particularly around the difficulty of navigation and the lack of notifications. They believe it would be beneficial if committee members received an e-mail every time a new social grant application was posted on Teams, so that applications do not build up.
- RK states that other committees also share the view that Teams is not for everyone, and e-mails work quite well.
- OG, for context, states that the Student Officer Committee is also exploring ways to put grant applications through Teams because there have been a lot of emergency requests, and utilising Teams means that voting does not have to be postponed until the next committee meeting.
- JML explains that the main problem with Teams is that it does not notify. The committee concurs.
- SA requests a clarification on who the funding applications are sent to. JM explains that all applications are sent to the Postgraduate Education Officer.
- SA suggests having the Postgraduate Education Officer e-mail the committee whenever a new application is posted on teams. The committee concurs.

**ACTION: MM to e-mail committee members whenever a new funding application is posted on Teams.**

- CH explains that a committee member expressed that it is difficult to distinguish between different applications on Teams.

- GB shares this belief, and states that the fact that Teams does not present the applications in date order makes it a difficult platform to use.
- JM explains that, once an application has been approved, its status should change to indicate this. They provide a brief demonstration of what this looks like.
- GB suggests changing the way that approved applications are indicated to something other than "APP", as this can be confused with "Application" and this may create some problems.
- JM believes that if every person is tagged when a new application is up, the tagged people will get a notification.
- JML states that it would be better if there was a vote on whether the committee would like the Postgraduate Education Officer to notify them whenever a new application is posted, as this would defer the pressure of having to clarify the messy layout of Teams from the officer. JM adds that Teams is an infrastructural SU platform, and therefore they doubt that it could be completely omitted from the committee's decision-making.
- SA concurs with JML that sending out e-mails to the committee would defer a lot of pressure from the Postgraduate Education Officer.

**PGCA446 Apology to Union Council**

- Item partially discussed in Agenda Item PGCA440. MM not present to raise this item.

**PGCA447 Any Other Business**

- SA explains that they have been working on some bye-laws, and they are aiming to change the two places in committee reserved for students from the Quadram Institute to one PGR protected place. They ask JM to display the current bye-law, and the proposed changes.
- SA explains that the rationale behind this proposed change is that it would improve the situation for reaching quorum, as it would improve attendance. JM adds that this would also cause required attendance to reach quorum from 7 to 6 members.
- JML inquires as to how this would work procedurally.
- JM explains that this would trigger an election.
- The committee concurs.
- JM, for additional context, explains that themselves and AE are in contact with Quadram Institute to determine the representation that would best work for them, in order to keep them included within postgraduate democracy.
- RK asks for a clarification on what the Quadram Institute is. SA explains that they are considered to be UEA students, but operate at the Norwich Research Park.
- CH states that they attended a meeting with JML about PGR casualised work and ending zero-hour contracts. They state that they are aware of the large-scale campaigns that have taken

place in the past about this, but believe that it is a worthwhile thing to mention.

-JML states that there is an acceleration in proceedings around ending zero-hour contracts, and they believe that it is something that the postgraduate committee needs to be aware of.

-GB states that the SU uses zero-hour contracts for their student staff, and this is something that is generally well-received by undergraduate students, however the situation is different for PGRs. They therefore believe that the committee would have to be very specific about this if they launched a campaign.

-JM states that themselves and MM have regular meetings with the president of UCU to discuss these issues and how they can get more involved.

### **Time, date and place of next meeting**

November 20<sup>th</sup> 2018, 5.15-7.15pm, Bookable Rooms 7 & 8

## Appendix

### *PGCA437 Action Log 9<sup>th</sup> November 2018*

Date Commissioned	Action Required	Assigned To:	Date to be actioned by:
09/11/18	E-mail all committee members whenever a new funding application is posted on Teams, to notify them	<b>MM</b>	Action to occur indefinitely