

## minutes

Meeting:	Postgraduate Committee
Date:	10 <sup>th</sup> October 2018
Paper:	Postgraduate Committee Autumn 18 – 1 (PGCA100)
Author:	Alexandros Efstratiou
Purpose:	Record of Decision Making

uea|su

### Minutes of the Postgraduate Committee 10<sup>th</sup> October 2018

---

**Committee members present:** Martin Marko (PG Education Officer), Sophie Atherton (Campaigns and Democracy Officer), Oli Gray (Activities and Opportunities Officer), Georgina Burchell (Welfare, Community and Diversity Officer), James McClean (AMA), Anush Rajagopal (LAW), Saket Jalan (NBS), Rob Klim (DEV)

**Chair:** Andrea James (AMA)

**Apologies:** Charlotte Hallahan (LDC)

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

## **PGCA101 Elect the Chair and Deputy Chair of Committee**

- AR is the acting chair until a chair is elected, due to their role as both a committee member and chair of the PG assembly.
- AR inquires about procedures of voting when committee members are absent, and whether they can run for the position of committee chair.
- AR opens nominations for the position of PG committee chair.
- AR and AJ self-nominate. Nominees give a one-minute speech each.
- As nominee, AR cannot lead voting. GB, in their capacity as Welfare, Community, and Diversity officer, leads the voting by show of hands.
- The votes are: 5 for AJ, 1 for AR, 1 for R.O.N. There are 2 abstentions.
- AJ is elected as chair of the PG Committee.

## **PGCA102 Statement from the chair**

- AJ welcomes everyone to the committee and suggests that nominations for deputy chair are postponed until the next meeting, so that members that are absent in the present meeting, but wish to nominate themselves, can do so. The committee concurs.
- The chair opens voting on whether an emergency agenda item submitted by MM should be heard (see Appendix). Voting to hear the agenda item is based on the premise that it was not submitted at least 24 hours prior to the meeting, as stated in the bye-laws.
- Committee votes to hear the item by 5 votes to 4, with one of the 'against' votes being granted at the chairs' discretion. One abstention.
- MM, as proposer of the item, gives a speech as to why the committee should accept their item, stating that committee was not yet ready to meet.
- SA gives a speech against the proposed item, under the premise that the PG Officer should always prioritise presence at their accountable body over everything else.
- AR asks for further reasoning as to why committee should be postponed, since the first meeting of the year must be prompt in order to address pending business.
- MM explains that with the absences and lack of preparation due to time constraints, the current committee meeting would be insufficient to make appropriate decisions.
- AJ makes the case that they feel MM's points were not strong enough to justify the agenda item. They further state that the committee's date was set long ago, and that the Postgraduate Education Officer taking days off on the committee date was inappropriate. AJ further explains that apologies are sent in confidence to the chair, and that MM broke this confidence against another committee member by disclosing their

subsequent absence to the whole of committee before the meeting, via an e-mail they sent to justify their item.  
-Voting opens on whether the item should be accepted.  
-The item is rejected by 6 votes to none. Two abstentions.

**PGCA103 Minutes of the Last Meeting**

-No previous minutes to approve or challenge as this is the first meeting of the year.

**PGCA104 Action Log**

-No action log for the above reason.

**PGCA105 Graduate Centre Management Committee (Sub-Committee of Management Committee)**

-JM explains what the Graduate Centre Management Committee is and what it does.

-AR inquires about where profits from Scholars bar go.

-JM specifies that Scholars bar does not necessarily make a profit, as its role is to provide affordable services to Postgraduate students rather than being a profitable outlet, however if there is a positive turnover, this goes towards a general Students' Union cash pool, not the Postgraduate budget. However, they state that in the same way, losses from Scholars bar are also covered by the SU in general, rather than the Postgraduate budget.

-AR inquires whether GCMC members can have input into this matter. JM clarifies that they can.

-AR and JMC nominate themselves for the position of GCMC members.

-There are two positions in the GCMC, therefore voting opens in the form of objections to AR and JMC becoming members of GCMC. There are no objections.

-AR and JMC are elected as GCMC members.

**PGCA106 Postgraduate(su) Budget**

**a. Budget allocation**

-AJ opens discussion on how committee should allocate its £17,500 budget.

-AR suggests that committee should wait to consult the next assembly in order to allocate the budget accordingly.

-JMC argues that this would make no significant difference.

-AJ inquires whether committee can make non-binding budget decisions. JM states that this is at the committee's discretion.

-AR and JMC provide arguments for and against a provisional, rather than set, budget allocation, respectively.

-SA states that the budget had a £8000 underspend last year, meaning that there would be no reason to wait until assembly

as, even with the reduced budget compared to last year, there would most likely still be a surplus.

- AR insists that there is no reason to make a binding decision.
- JMC makes the case that, if only one assembly member gives a preference for an allocated budget, it should not overpower the committee's consensus.
- AR states that they would treat the student body as a whole, and only if there was an agreed suggestion from the majority of the PG student body.
- AJ states that they could make a decision now, and bring a motion to re-visit this later on.
- The committee concurs.
- AJ gives some information on the budget and spending of last year, noting that the campaigns budget was the most underspent, with activities having the biggest spending.
- AR and SJ argue that more money should be allocated to the activities budget this year.
- AR states that there was a lack of smaller scale events from pg(su), and it is important to host events that help people socialize. More spending on activities could assist with that.
- SJ expresses their agreement with AR, stating that most events held on and around campus, such as parties, are very undergraduate-focused and put postgraduate students off. Postgraduate students could use PG-specific events like that.
- SA makes the case that, despite a £700 underspend in activities, there was a very nice and diverse programme of summer events.
- SJ states that they would like more events over the September period.
- SA inquires whether SJ and AR would like PGT- or PGR-specific, or general PG events, and asks JM for a clarification on the range of events hosted over freshers' week.
- JM clarifies that the freshers' programme included PGR-specific and PG-general events.
- AR states that PGRs may be more flexible in how they allocate their time, and so some PGT-specific events could help.
- JMC states that PGR students are at university for a longer time, and given potential increases in PGR numbers, there may be a need for more spending in things like the conference fund. They further make the case that conferences are crucial in PGR success, and cutting conference funding with the purpose of re-allocating it to activities would not send the right messages.
- AR states that it would be beneficial to attempt to engage with PGTs.
- JMC states that pg(su) is the only place where PGRs have a voice, and because they are also small in numbers, it is the pg(su)'s duty to represent them.
- AR argues that, since PGTs are higher in numbers, more of the pg(su) budget should be allocated to them, proportionally.
- SA expresses agreement with JMC, and states that this would reflect very poorly on PGR students.

- AJ states that part of the reason behind the underspend in conference fund is possibly a lack of awareness around its existence.
- SA states that this is an advertising issue and the committee should take steps to push it outward.
- AJ agrees and states that committee should take this idea forward.
- AR inquires where the campaigns budget is spent.
- SA clarifies with an example of last year's Associate Tutor Employment Rights campaign.
- GB states that campaigns are usually very costly, so that would be a reason for a higher campaigns budget if committee wants to launch campaigns, or wants to leave space to launch campaigns in the case of unexpected events.
- AJ stresses the importance of campaigns, referencing the impact of last year's AT employment rights campaign. They further make the case that budgets which were underspent have already been reduced in the budget template brought to committee. In combination with better outreach, these new amounts should be appropriate.
- SJ makes the case that committee should also account for this year's planning, rather than just last year's budget allocation.
- AR states that despite the social grant being brought up in last year's assembly, it still showed an underspend, and PG students were not made aware of ongoing activities last year.

**ACTION: MM to look into advertising of activities and postgraduate funding.**

- There are some questions around how the SU's budget is allocated in terms of undergraduate and postgraduate spending. SA states that this is specified in the bye-laws.
- GB states that the undergraduate budget is not much higher than the postgraduate budget, and a lot of the undergraduate budget is spent on issues that can extend to students who are not undergraduates.
- JMC supports that these statements could serve to explain the logic behind the PG budget, and that having a PG-specific budget is in the best interest of PG students.
- AJ asks whether the committee is happy to approve the provided template budget provisionally, based on the premise that it can later be amended through a motion.
- AR inquires whether any member of the committee can submit a motion to amend the budget.
- SA states that this is true, and that motions need to be submitted to the chair of committee at least 48 hours before the next committee meeting.
- JMC states that the committee is an elected body that has been voted through democratic procedures to make key decisions for postgraduate students, and it may reflect badly if committee explicitly consults assembly on budget decisions.
- AJ opens voting to approve or disapprove a provisional budget.

-The budget is approved by 7 votes to 1. One abstention.

### **b. Ongoing projects needing initial approval**

-JM is called to clarify what the Care Packages are, and to further explain the financing behind them and PG Yoga. They add that Care Packages were very successful.

-AR asks about the process of Care Packages. JM explains it, and they state that it took a total spending of about £600, with about 70 recipients.

-AJ asks whether committee should continue Care Packages.

-AR states that this money should come out of Campaigns rather than Activities.

-AJ opens voting on where Care Package funding should come from.

-There are 6 votes in favour of Care Package funding coming from Activities, and 1 vote in favour of funding coming from Campaigns.

-Care Packages will be continued, and costs covered from the Activities budget.

-AJ asks whether committee would like to keep assembly food and drinks. Committee concurs.

-MM explains their progress on PG Yoga, having secured a bigger space, and asks whether the committee would be eager to expand it to more sessions per week. They state that this could also increase income.

-SA and RK state that pg(su) is a charity, and so should not aim at more income.

-JMC states that expansion, in this sense, could allow pg(su) to reduce prices further for individual attendees.

-MM asks committee whether they would like to expand Yoga. AJ states that committee should vote on what is already happening, and MM could make a separate campaign from there.

-Committee concurs that Yoga should continue as it has already been running.

### **PGCA107 Postgraduate(su) Inductions**

-The chair asks MM to present on their item.

-MM states that they have not prepared for any of their items on the agenda.

### **PGCA108 Postgraduate Democracy Elections**

-MM not prepared to present.

### **PGCA109 Officer Accountability: Plan of Action and Overall Campaign Progress**

-MM not prepared to present.

**PGCA110 Inclusion of a Standing Item to the Committee Agenda**

- MM suggests including a new standing item to the agenda, called 'Assembly Discussion'. This item would allow points to be brought from the chair of assembly for committee to discuss.
- Committee concurs to including the standing item in the agenda.

**PGCA111 PhD Network and Bitesize Seminar Series**

- MM not prepared to present.

**PGCA112 Postgraduate Engagement with Sports and Societies**

- MM not prepared to present.

**PGCA113 Any Other Business**

- MM's points to be carried over to the next meeting's agenda.

**PGCA114 Time, date and place of next meeting**

- Committee to decide on dates for committee meetings for the rest of the year.
- JM states that the provisional committee dates take into account Union Council dates, as well as time limits as to how many days in advance policy can be submitted to council.
- SA states that on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of October, 2018, for which the next meeting is scheduled, full-time officers will have commitments which means they will be unable to attend.
- There are some clarifications as to how many meetings can be held in a single week, after suggestions to push the meeting back.
- Committee concurs to move the next meeting to Friday 26<sup>th</sup> October, 2018, 5:15pm.
- Further amendments:
  - November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2018 **to** November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2018
- No further amendments.
- Date, time and place of next meeting is October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018, 5:15pm, Bookable rooms 7 & 8.

## Appendix

### *PGCA100 Action Log 10<sup>th</sup> October 2018*

Date Commissioned	Action Required	Assigned To:	Date to be actioned by:
10/10/18	Look into advertising of activities and postgraduate funding	<b>MM</b>	26/10/18

### *Emergency agenda item*

PGC Emergency item 10th Oct 2018

Reasons for not holding the meeting on the above date and postponing until later date:

Non-attendance and incapability of PGC members:

1 PGC member

- unable to attend

1 Postgraduate education officer (PEO)

- holiday

- taking part in an election – to represent PG students nationally

- reports not ready (not enough time to prepare) e.g. the budget

1 PTO

- only elected the day before, feeling unprepared (i.e. no training) to make decisions in arguably the most important meeting of the year

2 Institute representatives

- indicating refusal to attend; currently in the process of communicating future arrangements

This means 50% of non-FTO representatives would be either unable to attend or unfit to make judgements, plus PEO would be unable to attend which is an additional, significant drawback. This sort of unattendance is unsuitable for holding a key meeting which includes major decisions such as the election of a chair and approval of the budget. New meeting dates should be explored to improve attendance. The original meeting date might have been approved in the



past, however I doubt the suitability of this date due to the above reasons and therefore challenge the decision to hold the first meeting on such date.

I would like to exercise my judgement and relevant decision-making power to suggest the postponement of this meeting to a later date, as I believe this is in the best interest of our PG members.

However, I do not wish to negatively impact on the running of the PGC and deny the opportunity for the newly elected members to meet for the first time as provisionally planned. As such and at the discretion of the chair, I would like to seek permission to be absent from this meeting due to reasons indicated above, but do I suggest the PGC can make a judgement in the absence of some PGC members and myself on the following:

Suggestions box for Scholars

Consider the current Social Grant applications on teams

Consider funding ~5 pizzas for a PGR workshop at the start of November

"we're planning to give an informal presentation and keep things fairly focused around ssDNAfrica. The social will be happening in rooms 7/8 in the grad centre on Thursday 1st November from 17:30. As I previously mentioned we'd really like to provide some pizzas to encourage people to come and meet us – I was considering ordering pizzas from the SU bar and bringing them upstairs (assuming we're allowed to eat hot food in the bookable rooms). Do you think the SU may be able to provide some funding to cover the cost of the food? All the attendees will be PGR students from SCI or DEV."

Find out how who in the SU is responsible for fixing printers at Scholars balcony

Consider funding/subsidising a paintball social for PGRs (potentially also open to PGTs) on 21st October: three 9-seater minibuses (as requested by PhD network group) currently quoted at £69.18 + VAT per vehicle

Yoga:

- Rewarding temporary yoga teacher – Finn has been unable to teach yoga for 2 weeks so cover was found and the session last Wednesday and today are delivered free of charge to students. The teacher is leading the session for free and cannot submit an invoice as they are bound by visa conditions. It would be reasonable to say thank you to the teacher in a way that benefits them, but is not in the breach of their visa terms and is legal – perhaps a few Scholars drinks vouchers or free entry to some event – we could ask about their preference if this is approved in principle.

- A larger room for yoga has almost been secured for this semester, with the potential to extend into the next semester. The stated capacity of this room is 80, and we could hold a session on the weekend as well. The aim would be to charge students a small fee so we can at least break even. We have also invested into yoga mats. If it is agreed, I can pursue this further. We would

require an annual investment (not upfront but overall) equal to the number of classes per week at about £30 per session, with the aim of recovering this cost as sessions are held.

Discussion on PEO past actions

Issues to be discussed at a later date:

Date of the next meeting

Budget

Elections

Inductions

Graduate Centre Management Group