

## minutes

Meeting:	Postgraduate Committee
Date:	26 <sup>th</sup> October 2018
Paper:	Postgraduate Committee Autumn 18 – 2 (PGCA200)
Author:	Alexandros Efstratiou
Purpose:	Record of Decision Making

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### Minutes of the Postgraduate Committee 26<sup>th</sup> October 2018

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**Committee members present:** Martin Marko (PG Education Officer), Sophie Atherton (Campaigns and Democracy Officer), Georgina Burchell (Welfare, Community and Diversity Officer), Charlotte Hallahan (LDC), James McLean (AMA), Anush Rajagopal (LAW), Saket Jalan (NBS)

**Chair:** Andrea James (AMA)

**Apologies:** Oli Gray (Activities and Opportunities Officer), Rob Klim (Ethical Issues Officer)

**In attendance:** Josh Melling (Student Engagement Coordinator – PG), Alexandros Efstratiou (Advocacy Assistant), Lewis Martin (Democratic Procedures Committee)

## **PGCA201 Statement from the Chair**

-AJ begins the meeting by establishing some rules of engagement, following that the committee is a positive, collaborative space aiming to support all postgraduate students. They state that all members should work with, and not against, each other, and they ask the committee members to be respectful and not interrupt others while they are speaking. Further, they explain that their role is to facilitate the discussion and they therefore may have to step in if some people prevent others from speaking.

-AJ reads out the bye-laws that pertain to the PG Committee, as stated in the union's website and in the committee handbook.

-Referring to a specific bye-law, AJ states that it is up to the committee and pg(su) staff to organise and run campaigns and activities for postgraduate students. They further thank MM for their work in this area, and state that the committee will be taking over these remits from now on.

-AJ states that, due to concerns in how the committee is run, they will be carrying out their role as chair of the committee in full accordance with the bye-laws.

-AJ, having explained each person's role in the committee as they arise from the bye-laws, expresses their expectation that everybody will be following these laws to carry out their responsibilities.

-AJ states that, due to some issues raised at the postgraduate assembly, they have asked a member of the Democratic Procedures Committee (DPC) to observe the meeting to ensure everybody is comfortable with proceedings.

-AJ informs the committee that an emergency agenda item was submitted by SA, and this will be read out after the standing agenda items have been discussed, before agenda item 205.

-MM states that they wish to merge item 207 with item 205. AJ concurs.

## **PGCA202 Minutes of the Last Meeting**

-MM asks that the full emergency item that was submitted for last committee be included in the minutes of the previous meeting, rather than just a summary of it, so that the full premise of the item is captured.

-Minutes are approved unanimously.

## **PGCA203 Action Log**

-AJ asks MM to report on their action point, which was to examine advertising of postgraduate activities and funding.

-MM states that they wish to look into individual costs of activities, and they further explain that funding may be in a good position as they have already received some applications, meaning that students are aware of it. They further state that they could begin advertising funding, not just activities, on

pg(su) social media. They propose that an action point can be made to their name, to produce a report on activities of this year and the previous year.

-AJ asks present members of staff whether a report is already in progress, and explain that they believe a report on activity spending has already been produced. MM suggests bringing the report to committee to examine.

-SA clarifies that the point they actioned MM with pertained to promoting opportunities that are available to postgraduate students in general, and suggests that MM could work with communications to establish a framework of promotion.

-MM suggests actioning themselves with producing a report regarding the uptake of induction period activities in the past and present year.

-AJ states that the specific action point was about improving advertising of activities.

-SA suggests that MM works with staff to produce ideas on how to improve advertising. MM concurs.

**ONGOING ACTION: MM to liaise with marketing and advertising staff to improve activity promotion.**

-AR suggests utilising spaces that are commonly used by PGTs and PGRs as advertising hubs.

-MM asks whether staff have any updates from marketing and communications regarding this.

-AJ grants permission to JM to speak.

-JM explains that they are currently collaborating with staff in communications to produce banners explaining what the conference fund and social grant do and what they are, to be placed in the Scholars Bar. They further explain that animations for the two funds are currently in the works, and design requests have already been placed. JM also states that they have established relationships with the PhD network as another channel of promoting activities, and expresses agreement with AR's suggestion on utilising postgraduate spaces.

-MM suggests establishing links between pg(su) activities and newsletters such as The Square.

## **PGCA204 Election of the Deputy Chair of Committee**

-AJ opens nominations for the position of Deputy Chair of Committee.

-CH nominates themselves and explain why they believe they are suitable for the position.

-No further nominations.

-There are some clarifications by LM regarding the voting process that must be followed, given that there is only one nominee.

-Voting opens.

For CH: 8

For R. O. N: 0  
Abstentions: 0

-CH is elected as Deputy Chair of Committee.

### **Emergency agenda item**

-AJ opens voting on whether committee members would like to hear SA's emergency item.

For: 8  
Against: 0  
Abstentions: 0

-The committee concurs to hear the item.

-SA explains their item (Appendix), which aims at explaining the roles of everybody sitting on committee. They explain that the committee's role is to represent postgraduate students on issues outside their education, since education is MM's remit.

-MM requests a clarification on a 48-hour limit outlined in the item. SA explains that emergency items, such as emergency papers or emergency motions, must be submitted within 48 hours of the meeting to be considered as emergency, however it will be at the chair's discretion to bring this to the committee. If it is brought to committee, then members must vote on whether they would like to hear the emergency item or not. Anything submitted prior to the 48 hour period will be inserted into the agenda, and will not be at the chair's discretion to raise.

-SA explains that a DPC member is present to make any further clarifications.

-AJ opens voting on whether the committee would like to hear the DPC member. The committee votes in favour of this unanimously.

-LM explains that emergency motions may be submitted after the 48-hour buffer period leading up to committee, provided that they are reactionary to a national-level event that took place. They further explain that emergency motions must be treated like any other motion, meaning that they cannot simply be sent as e-mails, they require a seconder, and they must be set out as any other motion as they are also bound by bye-laws and are read by Trustees. LM also explains that if the Charity Commission were to look at a motion which, for any reason, did not fit within the bye-laws, this would be a significant breach of charity law, stressing the severity of this, as it would not only affect the PG committee, but also the entire Students' Union. For this reason, motions need to be structured accordingly, even if they are being put forward for a simple reason.

-MM inquires as to what this could mean retrospectively.

-LM explains that Trustees would have to rule such a motion out of order, and it would need to be removed from the website. However, they state that ideally, inappropriately structured motions should not even reach this stage.

-MM asks whether something can be done about a motion that was not compliant with bye-laws, but was still submitted. LM states that at this point, it will simply have to be flagged up to Trustees, and they will have to rule it out of order. For future reference, they state that ideally, if it's a motion submitted to assembly, the chair of assembly will rule it out of order and not present it. If it's a motion submitted for Union Council, it will be up to the committee to rule it out of order. LM signposts the committee to the guidelines for producing a motion, and state that members can consult these guidelines.

-GB raises a question as to the emergency item submitted by SA for the present meeting. LM clarifies that SA submitted an emergency agenda item, not a motion, and therefore the structure of that item was appropriate for its purpose.

-CH, for clarification, states that an emergency motion would aim at formulating policy, whereas an emergency agenda item would aim at producing discussion. LM states that this is correct.

-LM further explains that, for any motions, the proposer and seconder must be clearly identified, and a motion cannot be read out without explicitly stating who its proposers are. They state that this is an issue of accountability, and also transparency, in that they must be verifiable as students at UEA. If the motion has come from a member of staff, this is a serious offence that could even be grounds for shutting uea(su) down under charity law.

-Following a question from AR, LM explains the main differences between an agenda item and a motion. They state that a motion must include notes, believes, and resolves sections, laid out by the proposer and seconder, while an agenda item is simply a point of discussion. As such, there is no vote at the end of an agenda item, as what is essentially being voted on in motions is the resolves section.

-JM clarifies that members can bring policy as agenda items for discussion, to inform notes, believes and resolves. However, this will act only as a point of discussion, and will not be voted on.

-SA clarifies that a proposer would only need one seconder, and no more, to put a motion forward.

-LM states that there is only one case where this would not be the case, and that would be a motion of no confidence in any officer, which would require 10 seconders.

-LM goes on to explain that the key point is that any emergency motion, whether it is for policy or a vote of no confidence, must be viewable by everyone, and its proposers and seconders must be identified. If they are not, the motion cannot be spoken about.

-MM raises an action point to provide chair training on how to evaluate motions and rule them out of order if they are not compliant with bye-laws.

-JM states that there will be extra training provided by the Democracy department.

**ACTION: SA to look into training provided for chairs with regards to motions.**

- AJ asks if anybody else has further questions for DPC.
- LM states that this is the first time that DPC has felt the need to attend a committee, as there are legitimate concerns about what is said at Union Council that relate to DPC.
- SA states that they also sit on DPC, and if there are any action points, they can take them to DPC.
- MM suggests the possibility of not allowing a chair to chair a meeting until they have received this training.
- LM states that this would be ideal, however there are practical problems in that if the chair cannot make the training, then meetings could be without a chair for weeks. They further explain that this is the reason that DPC make sure they support the chair of Union Council as much as they can, when they are elected, and that this is the only way to ensure that meetings do not lack a chair for too long.
- MM suggests that DPC attends meetings until the chairs receive this training, to ensure that democratic procedures are followed and that mistakes such as those of previous meetings are avoided.
- LM states that DPC is made up of volunteers, and something like this would hugely expand the remit of that body. DPC would then have to attend every sub-committee and assembly which would drastically increase workload.
- SA states that, as is the case in the present meeting, DPC will attend meetings if there are substantial concerns, and they therefore feel that MM's suggestion is not necessary.
- LM states that they will also be going to assembly to witness events there, as the concerns are generally around the democratic function of pg(su), which includes the assembly.
- AR suggests extending this chair training to the chair of assembly as well. SA states that they will do so.

## **PGCA205 Assembly Discussion**

### **a. General discussion**

- AJ states that AR will be bringing some points from assembly to discuss.
- AR states that there was a general discussion about library spaces, and that it has been agreed that JM will run a poll on this matter to receive feedback.
- AR further states that they asked the assembly for feedback and ideas on events, and that PGT students expressed a desire to also hold PGT-specific events at some point. The assembly also suggested holding more events altogether. AR states that assembly did not have any other points of discussion.

### **b. Vote of no confidence at previous assembly**

-AJ initiates discussion on the motion of no confidence to the committee, which was brought to last assembly, stressing that this is a serious issue that warrants discussion. Separating themselves as chair and expressing their personal views, they state that the PG Education Officer attempting to remove a body that was voted by the postgraduate community was deeply troubling, especially as this body can hold the officer to account. AJ further explains that, from feedback they received from those present at assembly, it arises that appropriate procedures to file the motion were not followed. They go on to state that, although the motion was based on unfairness of elections, this year's elections were more democratic and fair than they have ever been before, since it provided the opportunity of a vote to people who could not attend the assembly as well. This resulted in one-third more votes being cast than the previous year. AJ clarifies that votes of no confidence need to be based on actions and one's unsuitability to fulfil their role, rather than anything else, as they feel there was a misunderstanding as to what a vote of no confidence is.

-LM states that it is very bad practice for an officer to no confidence the body that holds them accountable.

-MM states that they have brought apologies to amend their actions and apologize to the committee.

-LM states that it is deeply troubling that someone would attempt to remove a body that was elected by a student body and holds them accountable. They further state that, in most other charities, this would be grounds for removing a person from their position.

-MM expresses their agreement that the motion was far from best practice, but they explain that the motion had to do with the election process, and not the committee itself.

-AJ states that this is not the appropriate way to challenge an election process. MM concurs.

-AR separates themselves from the committee and speaks as chair of assembly. They apologize for not conducting the proceedings at assembly properly.

-MM requests a clarification on which procedures were not followed appropriately.

-LM states that, although they have not seen the motion, it was relayed to them that the proposer and seconder of the motion were not made clear.

-JM clarifies that the proposer and seconder were verbally clarified, however no copies of the motion were handed out to assembly participants. As such, the proceedings were more reliant on what the chair said. JM further directs committee to the minutes of the assembly in question.

-AJ states that, if the issue was the electoral procedure, a motion of no confidence in individual committee members is not an appropriate way to challenge that.

-LM states that individual members cannot be voted on, and the committee would have to be ejected as a whole. JM clarifies that, in Postgraduate Terms of Reference, the case is that

committee members must be voted on individually if a motion of no confidence is filed.

-MM clarifies that the individual vote was proposed at assembly, and was not set out that way in the motion.

-LM explains that, if this is the way that things are set out in the Postgraduate Terms of Reference, then procedure was followed in that respect.

### **c. Apologies from the PG Education Officer**

-MM asks if it would be appropriate for them to bring in their apologies now. SA concurs.

-MM apologises to the committee and states that the motion was far from the best thing to do. They state that their intention was not to incite any confrontation, but rather to amend some of the issues they felt arose from the election. They state that they were not happy with elections, and this was a poor attempt at making it right. They also state that, despite not being happy with what was said in Union Council, they appreciate it and express their understanding of how it can be justified. MM also states that they were very focused of outcomes, and perhaps disregarded the people involved in these processes, which was not the best thing to do. They state that they only wanted to do what was best for students and apologise for the way in which they approached the situation, and if they have caused any problems to the members of committee, although that was not their intention. MM goes on to suggest an action point to amend the damage that has been done, on both a unified body and an individual level, if the committee deems this appropriate. They further express their willingness to work towards any other points the committee has in order to resolve this.

-JML asks MM to explain specifically what their issues with the election process were, as they recall the motion had a big focus around splitting PGTs and PGRs. They go on to ask whether that is an issue for MM, as they would be greatly concerned if it is.

-MM states that this was part of the motion, and they felt like PGRs would have an advantage over PGTs because of how the election was set up, stating that they felt it was quite early for PGTs to get involved in the process.

-JML states that, in the same sense, there are more PGTs than PGRs which would inherently give PGTs an advantage. They go on to explain that all of the PGR members of the committee have also been PGTs in the past, so they do not exclusively exist as one or the other, and they are there to represent all PGs regardless.

-MM states that PGTs may have different issues at a given moment.

-AR clarifies that MM's point is that some PGRs are already at UEA, so they will be more knowledgeable around procedures than PGTs, as they only join for one year.

-JML states that this only applies to some PGRs, and that PGRs in their first year join after PGTs. They further state that this



divide could be deliberated all day, however they express concern that the PG committee is discussing such a divide. They further state that such actions by the PG Education Officer drive this divide, and the committee should be finding ways of binding PG students together, not separating them further.

-MM states that they also considered JML's point that there are more PGTs than PGRs, and that is why they felt PGTs and PGRs should be represented proportionally. However, they state that they understand JML's points and share their willingness to focus on PGR presentation.

-MM suggests working with staff to compile all bye-laws that are relevant to PG committee, so that they are all easily accessible.

-AJ states that these bye-laws are present in the committee handbook. MM states that the handbook does not cover everything, for example it does not cover elections.

-SA states that this would be something to put in the committee handbook, rather than re-writing the bye-laws. MM clarifies that this is not about re-writing the bye-laws, but rather collating all the relevant information from bye-laws.

-SA states that any information can be easily found using computer functions while in the bye-law documents. MM states that this would be useful to new chairs that may be unaware of everything they need to know. SA states that they could relay this to staff, but they would probably get the same computer function response. They add that they do not feel this would be a constructive use of staff time.

-LM states that, in addition to the bye-laws, this would also have to consider all of the Union policies, so a project like this would require a lot of time and pertain to the creation of a book. They explain that this is the reason that this information is available online.

-AJ states that the committee should move on to other agenda items, and asks for any last points on this topic.

-JML inquires whether the Postgraduate Education Officer can send a motion of no confidence in the committee to assembly.

-LM explains that, although it's best practice for someone not to cast such a motion against the body that holds them accountable, there is nothing in the bye-laws preventing this.

-SA states that JML could introduce a motion for a bye-law change if they sit on Union Council. LM states that they could help with writing such a motion.

-JML states that they wished MM would have first consulted the chair or support, so that a motion as radical as this did not go through a group of students who did not fully understand the situation. They add that they are unsure whether MM would have apologized if the motion had been successful, and that it makes them doubtful about the officer. However, they express a desire for change and for the atmosphere to become cordial.

-CH states that the members of committee who are PGR students do really care about PGT students, and they state that the two are not mutually exclusive. They explain that all PGR

committee members were once PGT students, and they can empathise with PGT students' struggles.

- MM states that they simply want to ensure that the whole of committee is happy with the way they are going forward with this. AJ asks how MM is planning to repair this. MM states that they were hoping for suggestions from the committee.
- AR suggests that MM comes to the next assembly to apologise. MM concurs.
- JML supports this idea and states that it would be beneficial for the officer to clarify their position, as they would not like subsequent assemblies to carry the narrative that PGTs are being underrepresented while PGRs are being focused on.
- MM also suggests that they apologise to Union Council. AJ states that they can do so if they wish.
- To conclude the item, AJ states that what happened at assembly should never have happened, as the election followed all procedures. They add that, possibly due to the work that the previous Postgraduate Education Officer did, there was a bigger turnout this year than any other year. The fact that there are more PGRs on committee should be deemed an achievement, as PGRs have historically not been engaged, and AJ states that the narrative of PGTs being underrepresented should be dropped to allow moving forward. They add that this has been the reason for the lack of events, as this put a hold on pending business that the committee needed to address.
- AJ asks if MM would like to say something more specific about elections.
- MM suggests that, although it arose that elections were conducted appropriately, it would still be beneficial to go back and examine them to learn for the future. This could be put through the Elections Commission.
- SA suggests having this conversation with the Campaigns and Policy team, as there are staff in the room whose jobs it is to ensure that elections are fair, equal and accessible to everyone. They also state that the Students' Union differs slightly from the Elections Commission in how they do things, as they are part of NUS and that is on a national level.
- MM concurs, and they state that they were simply raising whether it would be worth going away and working with staff support to examine this.
- AJ asks for any other comments.
- AR requests that members are less accusative and gentler with regards to others.
- AJ inquires whether AR is making reference to the officer.
- AR concurs, and believes that, in their experience insofar, most things said to the officer have been quite accusative.
- JML states that this climate was created by the motion of no confidence.
- AR states that they observed this even before the motion, and they simply ask that people are generally gentler to each other.
- MM states that they do not mind this, and they simply want to do their job properly while working with the committee.

- AJ states that the difference in tone arises from differences in expectations, as the full-time officers are paid to do their work, while everybody else is a volunteer.
- MM concurs.
- AJ states that there is a difference in responsibility, however, if anybody feels that someone is being specifically rude, they can flag that.
- AJ states that they will be leaving election-related issues with the officers.
- MM states that they have been compiling information on how committee instructions on bye-laws can be expanded, and they ask for any thoughts on this.
- SA inquires as to what this specifically pertains to.
- MM gives an example of the current bye-laws which require one PGR student on committee, and they state that the body could potentially benefit from having sub-committees, one for PGTs and one for PGRs, to consider these issues from specific angles.
- AJ suggests leaving that to the experience policy. MM states that they were going to weave that in, and AJ suggests waiting until that policy is discussed.

## **PGCA206 Postgraduate(su) Inductions**

- MM suggests bringing a report to the next meeting to outline what was done for inductions from July to September, specifically around attendance and the events held. They state that this could be a reference point for what to do in the future, in collaboration with the PGR Service.
- SA inquires whether MM has anything in writing to go through for the meeting. MM states that they do not.
- MM continues by explaining that the Activities and Opportunities Officer is in the process of compiling a report for induction events generally, so it would be worth looking at PG-specific aspects of that once it is finished. They state that this could be complimented by information from PG events, and that staff have already made some suggestions on what pg(su) can do further.
- MM additionally explains that branded materials were quite successful, so the committee could look into the costing and how many resources should be allocated towards these materials, with the deadline for that being January, to coincide with PGRs and NBI students who start then. They ask for any thoughts on this.
- CH concurs that a report on this would be beneficial.
- AJ states that, since these were items from the first committee meeting, these reports should have already been prepared. They explain that, without reports, there is not a lot for the committee to respond to.

**PGCA207 Postgraduate Democracy Elections**

-This item was merged and discussed with item PGCA205 – Assembly Discussion.

**PGCA208 Officer Accountability: Plan of Action and Overall Campaign Progress**

-MM signposts the committee to a manifesto progress report that they submitted for Union Council, as well as a table of past actions. They express their plans of incorporating more detail in their strategy, stating that the presented reports are points for discussion.

-CH inquires about the month that these reports pertain to.

-MM explains that the reports refer to October and go back all the way to August, and possibly July as well.

-SA clarifies the colour coding of the manifesto progress report, after a question by AR.

-AJ suggests that it would be more beneficial if MM presented their overall report to the committee, as the presented papers are difficult to process in the meeting.

-MM explains their work on addressing their priorities and manifesto (see Appendix).

-On a point around opening times and periods of Scholars Bar, SA explains that the limited opening hours of the bar during the summer period may be a finance related question, as there is probably a priority need to staff Unio, which is open to all students, over Scholars Bar, which is open to postgraduates only. LM further explains that the opening times of Scholars Bar are dictated by licensing laws. Scholars is licensed as a bar, meaning that it would require different licenses to change its opening and closing times.

-AJ states that the committee is running short on time, therefore MM suggests bringing these points next time. AJ concurs, and suggests placing an emphasis on the outcomes of MM's actions.

-JML explains that the committee exists to hold the Postgraduate Education Officer accountable, and they state that, while they understand the reasoning of the officer for looking at things like activities and food, the role of the officer is to focus on education. They inquire whether the officer will be prioritising the more educational aspects of their manifesto.

-MM explains that there was some negative feedback on course reps and how the system functions, so they will be focusing on that.

**PGCA209 PhD Network and Bitesize Seminar Series**

-MM states that the seminar series is happening, but at present, is not part of what pg(su) does. They ask whether any possible links can be made, with the aim to expand this across campus.

-AJ suggests that MM meets with the PhD Network and the relevant people for suggestions on how to initiate this in different schools.

**ACTION: MM to meet with relevant people within the PhD network to examine ways of running the Bitesize Seminar Series in different schools.**

## **PGCA210 Postgraduate Engagement with Sports and Societies**

-MM explains that this item is in reference to the Postgraduate Yoga that is currently being run, and asks whether the committee would be keen on expanding this from once a week to twice a week.

-AJ asks whether new Yoga mats have been bought.

-MM states that they have, and there are about 50 mats.

-AJ asks where the money for those came from.

-JM explains that last year's committee bought them.

-MM states that, if the turnout is large enough, they can expand the sessions, and they have been looking into securing rooms that are bookable on weekends, which have a capacity of 90.

-AJ suggests that MM liaises with the Activities and Opportunities Officer to examine this further.

-AR suggests establishing ways for PG students to more easily engage with sports, as they currently have to go out of their way to do sports. They make reference to the existing £1 swimming coupon, and raise the possibility of expanding these coupons to other sports as well, such as the gym. AR further suggests that MM collaborates with the Activities and Opportunities Officer, as well as Sportspark, to examine this possibility.

-AJ also suggests looking at last year's committee's progress on this.

-GB explains that a scheme called UEAAActive is available, which works in a similar manner to the coupons, and costs £1 for drop-in sessions. They suggest pushing this forward to get postgraduates more involved in UEAAActive sessions.

-AR explains that these sessions are held on specific times, which make them difficult for postgraduates to attend. On the contrary, the swimming coupons are for the whole day.

-JM clarifies that, following research from last year, postgraduates have difficulties with the timing of these sessions, and they tend to avoid them because the majority of attendees are undergraduates. They explain that the Yoga sessions and swimming coupons arose from extended conversations with UEASport, and that is the most they have been able to achieve in previous years.

-CH suggests holding more £1 activity classes.

-SA suggests e-mailing the Activities and Opportunities Officer regarding that, and also keeping the Postgraduate Education Officer up to date on this.

## **PGCA211 Voting Rights of Full-Time Officers**

-AR withdraws this item.

## **PGCA212 Postgraduate(su) Events**

-AR states that many Indian PGTs, as well as PGRs, suggested having festive events such as Diwali for postgraduates, since these are available to undergraduates. They use this as an example to explain the desire of many postgraduate students to have postgraduate-specific parties, which would also serve to assist networking. AR further states that they are unsure about when it would be best to hold such an event.

-JM makes a clarification around timescales, stating that it would be very difficult to hold an actual party, however a social event with some drinks and music could be quite easy to organise. They further state that there have been some priorities within pg(su) that took time away from event organising.

-AJ suggests utilising Microsoft Teams to catch up on lost time and deliberate on events and costing through that platform.

-AR suggests setting a date for such an event at the present meeting, to avoid unnecessary deliberation.

-SA suggests that AJ and AR, as chairs of committee and assembly respectively, discuss and set the date. AJ and AR concur.

-JM states that AR could also work with them to organise the event.

-AR raises discussion around looking at alternative sources of buying pizza for assembly. JM explains that they examined this, however there was an issue of transporting the food.

-GB states that buying pizzas from elsewhere would mean not supporting the union.

## **PGCA213 PGR Experience Policy**

-JML opens discussion on the policy that was passed by last year's Postgraduate Education Officer. They explain that the policy was to investigate PGR Engagement which dropped dramatically following the dissolve of the Graduate Student Association (GSA), specifically around what the causes were and what can be done to improve this. JML states that they would be happy to lead on this, and they could work with staff and the Postgraduate Education Officer.

-JM clarifies that every part of the policy, as well as every piece of research, must be approved by the committee.

-JML suggests going away to examine this, and bring discussion points to the committee.

**ACTION: JML, MM, JM and AE to investigate the causes of the decreased engagement by PGRs, as well as potential**

improvements to the situation, and bring these as an item to committee.

-MM suggests that the deadline for this be next calendar year. They state that they initially wanted this to be before then, however this may no longer be possible due to setbacks.

-JML states that the policy pertained to longer-term outcomes rather than sooner, and so may take a significant amount of time.

-SA states that policy lapses after 3 years, and therefore the sooner work is initiated on this, the better. MM concurs and clarifies that by next year, they meant January time.

## **PGCA214 Any Other Business**

-AR asks when Graduate Centre Management Committee meetings will be held.

-JM states that they are currently waiting on an appointment of the new Chief of Staff, and once they have their availability, they will be sending out invitations. They explain that this is because these meetings depend on staff availability.

-MM asks the committee whether they would like to have the refreshments offered at assembly extended to committee meetings as well.

-AJ asks if this would be coming out of the budget. MM states that it would, and specifically, from the activities budget, and they suggest that this could be capped at £20, or less.

-AJ states that they would be reluctant to allocate money meant for spending on student experience to this purpose, however they state they would be happy to personally provide snacks sometimes.

-CH concurs and states that, although refreshments can act as a way of bringing people to assembly, there is no attendance issue at committee, and committee was elected to attend these meetings.

-AJ states that there are a lot of items on Teams that are not social grant applications.

-MM states that they would be happy for the committee to take over the approval of any financial applications, and ask for thoughts on this.

-AR agrees with the idea, as committee is responsible for the budget.

-AJ explains that they would be happy with this, so long as MM looks after communication with students and relays any feedback on their applications to them.

-MM also suggests creating a general form for funding applications, as some applicants are unsure about what the funding can go towards.

-AR further suggests that the committee decides on caps for each funding application, as this has not been discussed yet.

-AJ states that the general Union Policy dictates a cap of £15 per head for meals.

- CH asks whether the spending can go towards alcohol.
- JM states that it can, however an equal or higher amount must be spent on non-alcoholic drinks.
- GB suggests placing a minimum cap on applications as well, so that there is no flood of applications requesting very small amounts of money, which would also compromise staff time and resources.
- SA clarifies that under a specific cap, applications may be approved by the Postgraduate Education Officer alone.
- JM explains that this is true for conference fund applications that are £150 or below. They also state that, since the current cap for conference fund is £150, carried over from last year's committee, realistically the Postgraduate Education Officer can approve any conference fund application alone. JM also states that the current cap for social grant applications is £300, however the committee can change these caps if they wish. They also explain that last year's committee sometimes exceeded the £300 cap in grants if they felt the event was very beneficial for the postgraduate community.
- AR suggests revisiting the caps, since the conference fund is granted to one person only, while the social grant is meant to fund over 20 people in some cases, and therefore the current allocations may be disproportionate.
- MM explains that the Activities and Opportunities Officer has some notes drafted on this, and they could therefore wait for them to return to discuss this in more detail.
- JML states that some schools offer a £150 fund for conferences, and if a student cannot get that fund, they will request financial assistance from pg(su) with the same amount in mind.
- JM clarifies that this is where the £150 cap for the conference fund came from in the first place.
- AR states that the committee must consider the lower budget in comparison to last year's budget.
- SA suggests introducing what the committee is willing to approve on teams for the conference fund and social grant as an agenda point.
- MM asks whether there is anything on teams to declare an application. AR states that there is a pending application for £550 for about 20 people.
- JM explains that, after discussions with the student who made the application, it arose that the student possibly misunderstood the process. They state that the application was for 27 people, and there is a cap at £15 per head. They further explain that counter-offers can be made on social grant applications.
- AJ states that they would be willing to fund £15 per head for 27 people, as the event caters to a demographic of students who do not tend to engage very much. AR states that they could get back to the student with a counter-offer of £405, which would be the product of this.
- SA explains that the student did not feel that they would use the full amount, as the attendance would likely be less than 27



people, however they still wanted to offer the option to anybody who wanted to attend.

-JM clarifies that if the committee would like to make a counter offer, they must put this on teams, and the counter-offer must reach the student through the Postgraduate Education Officer.

-After a question by CH, MM clarifies that the approved amount on applications is the maximum amount that can be paid back, and students must bring receipts as proof so that their spending can be refunded.

-After a question from AR, MM states that students must provide evidence in their applications, for example pictures or registration forms in conferences.

-AR suggests requesting a full list of people who will be attending an event for transparency.

-SA suggests that the committee decides on whether they would like to approve the full amount in the student's social grant application, or whether they would like to make a counter-offer.

-AJ states that they are willing to make a counter-offer of £15 per head for food for 27 people.

-AR inquires whether the committee can go beyond the £300 cap in certain cases.

-AJ states that they can do this in certain cases, and they are willing to go beyond the cap in this specific case as the event is aimed at students who do not tend to engage and benefit from the social grant, which is a very good initiative.

-AR suggests requesting a list of everybody who attended after the event.

-JM explains that part of the social grant requirement is a picture of everybody present at the event, along with a statement, to be sent to the officer as proof.

-MM suggests that a possibility would be to host the event on the website to monitor ticket purchases, however they state they are aware that private events cannot be hosted on the website.

-LM states that the website structure does not allow for the events to only be visible by specific people, and therefore this would have to be delegated to other departments. This would be a very long process, especially given the amount of work that the venues team currently have to do.

-AJ asks whether the committee is willing to make a counter-offer of £405 for 27 people.

-AR states that they would like the committee to agree on the cap they would like, or whether they should have no cap at all, in order to avoid confusion.

-MM suggests agreeing on caps at the next meeting, where the Activities and Opportunities Officer will be present.

-AJ concurs, and they state that, given the setbacks and the fact that this is the first social grant application they have received, it would make sense to agree on how to process it now.

-AJ asks MM to contact the student and inform them that the committee would be willing to approve the £15 per head for 27 people.

- AR suggests phrasing the offer as £15 per head, rather than £405, to avoid confusion. AJ explains that this would be contained within the offer.
- JM explains that the approval of social grant applications does not need to be unanimous, and it is a normal majority vote.
- AE states that it is not only the amount of spending, but the purpose of spending as well that needs to be clarified to the student.
- MM inquires whether the committee is only approving the food, or drinks as well.
- JM explains that the £15 per head cap includes food and drinks.
- SA suggests explaining in the counter-offer that the committee will fund the meal, however any drinks should be funded by the students.
- The committee concurs.

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

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

## Appendix

### *PGCA200 Action Log 26<sup>th</sup> October 2018*

Date Commissioned	Action Required	Assigned To:	Date to be actioned by:
10/10/18	[ONGOING] Liaise with marketing and advertising staff to promote activity promotion	<b>MM</b>	07/11/18
26/10/18	Look into training provided to chairs with regards to motions	<b>SA</b>	07/11/18
26/10/18	Meet with relevant people within the PhD network to examine ways of running the Bitesize Seminar Series in different schools.	<b>MM</b>	07/11/18
26/10/18	Investigate the causes of the decreased engagement by PGRs, as well as potential improvements to the situation, and bring these as an item to committee.	<b>JML, MM, JM, AE</b>	22/01/19