

GU Council Zoom Call – Minutes

07/04/20

Alessandro Ceccarelli, President

- Introduction to Zoom and good wishes from the GU to all present.
- This meeting will be a quick update on current and future work from the GU about coronavirus
- Two important sources of information
 - University FAQs page
 - Unions page on the CUSU website
- Top priority has been setting up a proper structure and governance for coronavirus response, and the GU pushed for the set up of a management group for the covid response with student representation
- Accommodation
 - Working to make sure that students had a clear response which allowed those who wished to stay in Cambridge to do so.
- Funding
 - Four weeks ago we had initial conversations with Cambridge DTP and other internal funding agencies, including Gates Cambridge and Cambridge Trust. These were followed by the letter written by me and Cambridge UCU to the internal heads of Cambridge funding bodies three weeks ago (18 March). [Link to the letter here](#).
 - Subsequently, we sent an open letter to UKRI and national funders, open to students from all universities. Aim to have a domino effect on other funders from this. More than 4000 signatures and reporting the Guardian and specialist publications (e.g. Wonkhe and Science).
 - Questions remain around intermissions but it is clear that extensions to research will now be covered.
 - Exchanges with the Cambridge local funders asking for assurances about funding during extension and intermission. Some slow progress has been made, and payments from some have been paid in advance. Work undergoing on the financial resources for this, and we continue to ask them to go further.
- Career advice and support
 - We have been working with the Careers Service on this, who are being proactive and liaising with employers to ensure that students are not disadvantaged. Working now on casual work, summer jobs, and professional experience.
- Assessment
 - Working both on PhD and Masters' both taught and research.
 - For PhD students there has been a response about submission, vivas and resubmission with clarification of how this will work, as well as extensions.
 - Master's is a more complex issue with much variation across faculties and depts because there are many types of masters. We are advocating for the safety net to apply in some way for taught single year master's courses, but this is complicated and how this could work is being looked at. More information should be forthcoming on this.
- Other work

- Support for fieldwork – there was some initial confusion around process here that affected this group with regard to Leave to Work Away. We think this is now clarified.
- Visas – we have worked with the International Student Office to make sure students all know how to access the support they are entitled to with Tier 4 visas.
- Current work
 - Funding and financial support – in particular clear response from internal, and intermissions
 - Training and support for tutors and supervisors about moving online and what resources are still available.
 - Post-submission support for PhD students, in particular financial
 - Clarity for master’s students especially around safety
 - Special hardship fund, investigating whether this is sustainable and being accessed by those who need it and looking to improve the process for this.
 - Looking at how the collegiate university can support students in private accommodation. This may be an issue that also needs some work at a national level.

Stella Swain, Welfare & Rights Officer

- Mainly focussing on support for students
 - There is a Facebook group for those still in Cambridge which is a source of community and resources.
 - SUAS advice workshops on assessment ongoing
- Work with counselling and DRC on how students can be accessing services remotely. Any students who already have or might need to make appointments can do so as normal, no matter where in the world people are. All of these things are available, including the Sexual Assault & Harassment Advisor, by video call, audio call or in the case of the SAHA live chat.
 - DRC: Students who have adjustments in place for exams and assessment should have these carried forward to new methods of assessment. These should now be easier to access, and disabled students should not be disadvantaged by this.
- Postgraduates who teach: supervisions should be continuing as normal but colleges remain the employers so should be contacted for details, there is some guidance available from the university about how to supervise online including disabled students and we are looking at more support for these students.

Q & A

- James Ball, Magdalene President-elect: Had issues from students who wanted to charge students more rent for wanting to move into more distant/isolated accommodation
 - SS: we do talk to the sec of senior tutors committee about this regularly and we can follow up on specifics. All colleges have agreed across the board that any student who wishes to can stay, but they can ask students to move for practical reasons. We could follow up with this one.
- Benjamin Remez, WCSA: VC said in a previous email that UCS would not take on new referrals, this has been a problem for some international students.
 - SS: There was an issue with new appointments for a while, but this should now be resolved. It is the case that counselling can’t be provided

internationally to many countries, but UCS are offering welfare and mental health support which will provide similar support.

- Benjamin Remez, WCSA: The university FAQ does mention deadline extensions, but a lot of students do have not the option to intermit because they can continue in principle but at a reduced pace. Those people are still worried about getting extensions even if this extension may have to be in a few years' time.
 - AC: this has been discussed and is part of the planning for after pandemic is over so answers may be a little slower on. The student task force will look at this issue and we will raise this issue of students who need extensions later on.
- Benjamin Remez, WCSA: This would normally be the open day season but these can't go on now. Is there any more info about this?
 - AC: These are difficult questions for the University and they are getting to considering this and many any other issues around admissions now, hopefully with more information soon. We are not in a position to know what will happen in a few months time, but the University is starting to move to a future planning stage and will start to consider this.
- Sandra del Valle, Robinson MCR VP External: Want to support Benjamin's point about extensions. RE hardship funding, this currently excludes students who have full funding but this can be a challenge in these exceptional circumstances and some of these students may still be in hardship.
 - AC: The criteria for this fund are being evaluated at the moment, the principle is still that people should look to their funders first. People should go to their college tutor first and there are a number of funds that might be available
 - SS: No groups of students are specifically excluded but the University will make sure that you have exhausted other sources first.
 - Some confusion arose over which fund the guidance related to. The Special Hardship fund can be only be applied to through the tutor and is different to the postgraduate specific funds. SS will follow up and ask for the website to be made clearer.

AC thanked all the MCR officers for the support they are giving to students at this difficult time.