

## GU Council Minutes 21/10/19

Present:

Oliver Marjot	St. Catharine's College MCR
Thea Chesterfield	Jesus College MCR
André Neto-Bradley	Fitzwilliam College MCR
Simone de Rijk	Clare Hall GSB
Emily Goodacre	Clare Hall GSB
Akhila Deduluri	Murray Edwards MCR
Michael Buran	Trinity BA Society
Aisha Sobey	Fitzwilliam College MCR
Torkel Loman	Girton College MCR
Yasmina Chami	Christ's College MCR
Dan Whitaker	Clare College MCR
Philipp Hirsch	Sidney Sussex MCR
Edward Parker Humphreys	CUSU
Sabine Matysik	Lucy Cavendish SU
Chris Davis	Darwin College Students' Association
Verner Viisainen	Pembroke College GP
S Georgieva	Newnham College MCR
Ryan Prestil	Darwin College Students' Association

In Attendance:

Alessandro Ceccarelli	Graduate Union
Mrittunjoy Guha Majumdar	Graduate Union
Stella Swain	Graduate Union/CUSU
Jess O'Brien	CUSU

### 1. Objections to the Order of Items on the Agenda

Item 5 was moved to after item 6 to allow for a late arrival.

It was agreed that the Secretary of Council would take the chair for items 6a-c in order to allow the GU President to present the items.

A round of introductions was taken from the room.

### 2. Approval of the Minutes of the Previous Council Meeting (Paper 1019.B)

A correction was made to the name of the representative from Fitzwilliam College MCR.

The minutes of the last meeting were approved.

### 3. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Previous Council Meeting

#### a. Ratification of resolutions of the previous meeting

Some motions from the previous meeting were to be considered again later as Item 6.

### 4. Reports from Sabbatical Officers and Officers of the Executive Committee

#### a. Report from the President (Verbal Report)

The President reported that since the last Council he had:

- Sat on a number of committees including General Board, University Council, Senior Tutors' Committee, Senior Tutors' Standing Committee on Education, Library Syndicate, and the Mental Health Project Board.
- Worked with the Vice-President, Cambridge UCU and other on allocation of teaching, and presented a report on this to STEC as well as submitted papers on other issues to committees including the Equality & Diversity Committee.
- Participated in a very successful Freshers' week and Fair, with good Freshers' Fair attendance and great engagement with the GU
- Visited colleges meet new students and speak with MCRs

#### **b. Report from the Vice-President (Verbal Report)**

The Vice-President gave an update on his campaigns which were:

- HALE – looking to support college based campaigns with MCR representatives, building on development of housing toolkit to build awareness of housing rights.
- Graduate Rights – number of successes recently including a research and resources overview form for setting expectations, training modules now available to all on Moodle for supporting graduate students, and the pilot of anonymous student feedback.
  - Future work would be on mandatory supervisor training and anti-casualisation
- CREATE was a new campaign against unconscious bias and racism. Initial discussions with E&D had taken place and a termcard was coming up soon.
- Departmental welfare – getting in contact with departments in order to encourage them to have dedicated staff member for welfare signposting to support students. He also reported involvement in running several successful exec events including brunch that 170 people came to, the alternative tour of Cambridge, and a BME film night.
  - The President of Murray Edwards MCR noted that a departmental initiative in the Chemistry dept works well. It was agreed that this should be followed up by the VP.

#### **c. Report from the Welfare & Rights Officer (Verbal Report)**

The WARO updated on her campaigns:

- Anti-racist work – opposing the Prevent duty, working with some colleges on this
- Support student sex workers – reading group this week, further work on supporting student sex workers including a workshop next week.
- Working with CUSU Women's officer around supporting survivors of sexual harassment and assault better.
- Also had been involved in Freshers' Fair, published termcard of events available online and in the SU lounge.

## 6. Ordinary Motions to Council

### a. Motion to Mandate the Graduate Union to endorse a Referendum concerning the Proposals on a New Single Students' Union (Paper 1019.D, Paper 1019.K and Paper 1019.L)

The President introduced the paper which explained the New-SU project. This version was the result of conversation over many months, building upon the work that the previous team did in terms of consultation and understanding what students want, in particular that there was more that could be done for postgraduates.

There is now a new website for the project, [new-su.co.uk](http://new-su.co.uk), with the structure and FAQs available publicly.

The Murray Edwards MCR President expressed support for the increased number of full time positions in the new structure, but asked whether there were concerns about the number of candidates there would be for those roles and whether there would still be ways to be involved in the Union part time.

- The GU President replied there would many more opportunities to get involved both full-time and part time because of the Executive Committee which will be balanced between UG and PG leaving many opportunities to get involved on a volunteer basis.

The Fitzwilliam MCR Treasurer asked about postgraduate specific quorums or electoral college systems at the Council to ensure the PG voice is heard.

- This is something that had been considered. For most issues at council there will be PG specific quoracy to ensure that there is good representation from both PG and UG Memberships. For bigger issues such as constitution changes there will both quoracy and a collegiate voting system.

The Fitzwilliam MCR Treasurer asked whether since undergraduates appear to outnumber postgraduates in the proposals whether the UGs in the sabbatical team could outvote the postgraduates.

- The GU President replied that there was a balance throughout the executive committee, campaigns, and council.
- The CUSU President noted that there are currently only two earmarked PG roles, so the new system is comparable to that, and that it was important also to emphasise the role of increased full time staff support in increasing the effectiveness of the sabbatical team and ensure that they are working for all the students that they represent.
- The Vice-President added that the Unions are looking to create a cultural change, and there is only so far we can structure this in to place.

The Christ's MCR President asked about next steps after this Council.

- The GU President responded that a full proposed timeline was available in the Council papers, which would include a final resolution of the trustees to call a referendum, a General Meeting, and following that the Referendum itself.

The Fitzwilliam MCR Treasurer asked if there was a threshold for votes in the referendum.

- It was clarified that the referendum would have a quorum of 200 votes as was specified by the Constitution.

- Some members of the Council raised concerns that this threshold seemed too low, and that a result with only this many votes would lack legitimacy, and asked if ways to accommodate a higher threshold could be investigated.
- The GU President noted that the referendum was not the only approval process and the GU trustees will also have to approve it, as will the university. The quorum was defined in the constitution and therefore not flexible.
- It was agreed that this would be looked into to see if a higher threshold for voting would be permissible.

The Girton MCR VP emphasised the importance of comparing the changes to the current structure. It was true that non-PG officers of the new Union might need reminding to represent PGs but they will have a stronger mandate to do so that at the moment.

The Sidney Sussex MCR President asked about the possibility of backing out of the plans in future if the merger is not successful. Are we going to accommodate growing grad numbers?

- The CUSU President reported that this was being considered, and that a review group would exist in order to ensure that at every stage the proposal for a new Union was working well.

The Newnham MCR President raised a concern that the GU was currently a useful source of targeted support for MCRs and postgraduates, and that a larger sabbatical team might dilute this.

- The GU President reported that a more concerning risk to the work of the GU was that postgraduate make up 44% of the student population (and that number continues to rise) but the GU has only 2.5 sabbs and 2 staff. The organisation is overstretched and this is only going to get worse. The proposal is written with the future in mind to make sure that postgraduate representation is safeguarded going forward. The current CUSU sabbatical team are very committed to PG students and there are many possibilities in the new union for postgraduates to be represented better.
- The CUSU President reported that CUSU know that people perceive it as an undergraduate union, and because we are the larger union this is a problem. Using the expertise of the GU while creating a single student union was thought to be the best way forward.

The Fitzwilliam MCR President expressed support for the intent of the new union, but asked about how the postgraduate voice will be safeguarded through future iterations of the structure.

- The GU President reported that signification thought had been put into safeguards for this, with a prescribed balance of postgraduates and undergraduates on the Board of Trustees, postgraduate sabbatical representation which will be at least as good as the status quo, and structural co-leadership of the campaigns to be written in to the governing documents of the new union.

The Clare MCR Vice-President noted that even in the worst-case scenario that the six sabbatical roles which could be occupied by undergraduates were only focussed on undergraduate issues, that might still be a better situation than the status quo because postgraduates would still see the benefits of a reduction in duplication in the new structure.

The Girton MCR Vice-President asked about postgraduate engagement with CUSU positions and whether a lack of engagement from postgraduate students could give undergraduates an electoral advantage in the new union.

- The CUSU President acknowledged that there were currently limited numbers of postgraduate students who ran for CUSU positions and that it would be a significant piece of work to ensure that they did nominate themselves for positions in the new union. This work was part of the culture change that the New-SU project involved. He expressed his view that students do not vote in elections on undergraduate/postgraduate lines as there are more issues which are shared than which are separate, and that the students' unions are taken more seriously when they have a united voice. This makes all students stronger.
- The Welfare & Rights Officer added that there was some reason to believe there would be no problem around postgraduates nominating themselves for positions and the GU's current roles tend to be well-contested.

The CUSU Disabled Students' Officer reported that liberation sabbatical officers are primarily responsible to their liberation groups, where issues are shared much more strongly between undergraduates and postgraduates. Having the resources to have full time officers for those groups working for both undergraduates and postgraduates would be of strong benefit to all students and the Cambridge SU would allow this.

The Lucy Cavendish SU Graduate Rep asked about how proxy voted would be restricted in the Council of the Cambridge SU, and in particular about whether an MCR could substitute for a JCR.

- The CUSU President noted that this was to be decided, but it was likely this would be acceptable so long as it had been pre-agreed by both parties. The referendum will be on the Constitution (or Articles), and the by-laws will have to be drafted after the referendum. There will opportunities for students to review these by-laws before they are implemented.

The Fitzwilliam MCR Treasurer asked what would happen if relations between the two unions were to deteriorate during the process of creating a new Union, and about the financial implications of the change.

- The CUSU President replied that a review group or similar structure will be created in order to define metrics for success and then ensure that this is working.
- It was confirmed that the funding that currently goes to CUSU and the GU will all go to the new union.

The Murray Edwards MCR President noted that it was positive to have discussions about the concerns raised, and also that the new union provided an opportunity for all MCRs and JCRs to work better together and for improvement to postgraduate student engagement across the University and colleges.

The GU Vice-President reported that he had initially been one of the most sceptical people within the two unions about this project but had come around to supporting it, with the point about having a balance of undergraduate and postgraduate voices at the trustee level being most important in alleviating his concerns.

*The Chair resolved to move to a vote on the motion.*

The representatives from Clare Hall GSB asked for clarification on the matter for vote.

The Chair read to the room the 'Resolves' section of the motion proposed.

*13 votes were received in favour and none against, with 3 abstentions. The motion therefore passed.*

**b. Motion to Mandate the Graduate Union to urge the University to set up Scholarship Programmes to support Home BME postgraduate students. (Paper 1019.E)**

The GU President introduced the motion, noting that the Student Support Initiative was a large University fundraising scheme. Most of the money from the scheme was already allocated, but there was a need for this kind of specific targeted funding, which already exists at the undergraduate level.

The Murray Edwards MCR President asked about the term 'Home BME', and proposed an amendment to substitute 'Home BME' for 'British Residents' throughout the motion.

*This amendment was taken as friendly.*

The Christ's MCR President asked why the motion was restricted to home students when an argument could be made that Home BME students have significantly more access to funding than international students and students from the Global South.

- The GU President responded there are particular groups of students that are not well-represented and this motion is proposed as a way of tackling one specific issue. This is not to say that there are no other groups that deserve additional funding.

The Clare Hall GSB Vice-President asked how the University would view this issue, and whether it would include international students in the scope of funding.

The Welfare & Rights Officer noted that the motion defines the campaigning goals of the Union rather than the Universities policy so it would be possible to include international students in the motion.

*The GU Vice-President proposed an amendment to strike 'Home' from the motion in order to expand its scope, which was taken as friendly.*

The Fitzwilliam MCR Treasurer argued that the split between international and home students was important, but that there was a specific problem about BME representation in the UK and it was important that targeted action is taken on that. There is funding currently available but it is not fairly distributed.

The Murray Edwards MCR President expressed the importance of considering socioeconomic background regardless of country in upholding the spirit of the motion.

Medwards Akhila – There can be a slippery slope because we do not look at socioeconomic background, this can matter much more than the country you come from. Can we uphold the spirit of this motion while ensuring the socioeconomic background is considered?

The CUSU Disabled Students' Officer claimed that this motion was important in view of the attainment gaps that exist in Cambridge, where the largest gaps were found for disabled and black home students, and so targeted efforts are needed in support of those groups.

*The Chair resolved to move to a vote.*

*16 votes were received in favour with none against and no abstentions. The motion therefore passed.*

No against or abstain

### **c. Motion to Support Transparent and Accessible Funding (Paper 1019.F)**

The GU President introduced the proposal, and in particular the existence of the postgraduate funding search tool. There was a need to increase awareness of the existence of the tool, and to encourage college governing bodies to inform the university about their available funding so that the funding search tool works better.

The Fitzwilliam MCR President raised that application fee was an additional problem for applicants, in particular those who had to pay the fee several times.

- The GU President reported that the GU had been working on this there is a waiver process in place already but there was more to be done, and that he would follow up on this.

The Murray Edwards MCR President noted that transparency about costs was also a big part of the funding problems that students face.

*The Chair resolved to move to a vote.*

*16 votes were received in favour with none against and no abstentions. The motion therefore passed.*

### **d. Motion to Support Fair & Equal Pay (Paper 1019.G, carried forward from the previous Council)**

The Welfare & Rights Officer introduced the motion, noting that it was carried forward from the last council so many in attendance would have seen is before. This motion was about supporting the current UCU ballots which affect graduate students in many ways. There is a ballot currently in progress.

The motion would mandate support of the ballots and, in the event of their success, supporting the strikes.

The Pembroke GP Externals Officer noted that on the pay cut at issue the UCU demand was to increase pay to keep pace with inflation. At the same time, college costs increase significantly faster than inflation at the moment so it was difficult this problem when there so many issues. Part of the problem was that all colleges were comparing themselves to the other so costs would always continue to rise.

- The Welfare & Rights Officer agreed that it was difficult and all the GU could was attempt to tackle the different issues with all of the means available to us. These are the kind of points made by the GU to official in the University and Colleges.

The GU Vice-President noted the context for this motion, which building on existing policy on pay and the fair allocation of teaching.

The Clare MCR Vice-President proposed an amendment to Resolves 7b. in order to reflect that some individual postgraduate work might be “university-organised” while not related to the strike. It was proposed to replace “University-organised activity” with “timetabled university activity”.

*This amendment was taken as friendly.*

The Girton MCR Vice-President reported that Cambridge were planning to reach out to grad students on work for supervisions as there are obviously problems there. This is still in planning stage but there will probably be an informational event soon.

The Pembroke GP Externals Officers asked why the GU was taking a position on action about pensions.

- The Welfare and Rights Officer noted that the situation with pensions is carried over from the last round of action, and that early career academics are most affected most negatively by the most recent change.

*The Chair resolved to move to a vote.*

*14 votes were received in favour with none against and 1 abstention. The motion therefore passed.*

### **e. Motion on Training for Good Supervision (Paper 1019.H, carried forward from the previous Council)**

The GU Vice-President introduced the motion, noting that good supervision was important and a point of interest for many postgraduate students. Bad supervision could be very damaging, and the onus is too much on students to resolve these issues.

The Murray Edwards MCR President expressed support for the motion but noted that training was of limited use without follow-up.

The Christ's MCR President reported that the training approach often does not reflect who supervisors are as many are senior academics who will not go to training, and suggested that instead what was required was clearer rules and procedures in departments.

The Fitzwilliam MCR President agreed that training would not solve the problem, and suggest that a University wide set of standards would be very useful and something that the GU could work on.

The CUSU Disabled Students' Officer noted that from her experience often both training and systems for following up were needed so that these can work together.

The GU Vice-President added that supervisors have responsibilities to their students irrespective of a desire to attend training, and these obligations are often not met. Clear statements of the rules ought to be apart of the training.

*The Chair resolved to move to a vote.*

*15 votes were received in favour with none against and no abstentions. The motion therefore passed.*

### **f. Motion on Post-Study Work Visas (Paper 1019.I) GU Council - 1019.A 21/10/19**

The GU Vice President introduced the motion, which aimed to extend the positive changes on post study work visas to this year's graduating students.

A amendment was received to change Resolves 2, removing "for students in the 2019/20 intake" and substituting "to any international student present in the UK at the time of the law change".

*This amendment was taken as friendly.*

*The Chair resolved to move to a vote.*

*15 votes were received in favour with none against and no abstentions. The motion therefore passed.*

### **g. Motion to Oppose University's Neglect of Sexual Misconduct (Paper 1019.J)**

The GU Vice-President introduced this motion.

It was clarified that the new disciplinary procedure would apply to any alleged misconduct that took place after October 1<sup>st</sup>. The motion was proposing that the University take further action on the interpretation of 'harassment' under the old system which had led to two cases being dismissed.

The Fitzwilliam MCR Treasurer noted that there had been communication from the Senior Pro Vice Chancellor (Education) on this matter, and expressed the view that this had been dishonest and an attempt at denying a significant problem.

Several present agreed with this view.

The Murray Edwards MCR President notes that this was an area where the University often fails students and that she knew people who had been forced to leave the University as a result. She asked if the GU could work to create support systems and look at complaints processes for those who have experienced abuse in the University.

- The Welfare & Rights Officer reported that this was an area of work for her this year, and that she was looking at creating 'Survivors Forums' for this purpose.

*The Chair resolved to move to a vote.*

*15 votes were received in favour with none against and no abstentions. The motion therefore passed.*

## **7. Emergency Motions**

### **a. Motion to sign the Trinity Hall Open Letter**

The Clare MCR Vice-President introduced the motion, asking both individuals and the GU formally to sign the letter condemning Trinity Hall's decision to admit Dr Peter Hutchinson as an Emeritus Fellow despite allegations of sexual misconduct towards students.

*The Chair resolved to move to a vote.*

*15 votes were received in favour with none against and no abstentions. The motion therefore passed.*

### **5. Dates of Elections for the Graduate Union 2019-20 (Paper 1019.C, carried forward from the previous Council)**

AC introduced the election paper, noting that there would be one additional open portfolio officer.

*15 votes were received in favour with none against and no abstentions. The electoral scheme was therefore approved.*

### **a. Appointment of the GU representative to the Elections Committee (Paper to be tabled at Council)**

The Fitzwilliam MCR President was nominated as the GU Returning Officer and member of Elections Committee.

*15 votes were received in favour with none against and no abstentions. Aisha Sobey was therefore elected GU Returning Officer.*

### **8. Election of the 2019-20 Council Chair**

The Girton MCR Vice-President was nominated as the Chair of Council.

An intention was expressed to stand down after six months to allow another candidate to run.

*15 votes were received in favour with none against and no abstentions. Torkel Loman was therefore appointed Chair.*

### **9. Dates of Upcoming Meetings**

a. Monday 2nd December, 7pm, SU Lounge

b. It was noted that a referendum on the new students' union would refer a general meeting to be held in November.

### **10. Any Other Business**

There was no other business.