



## **Agenda of a Meeting of the Graduate Union Council**

*To be held at 7pm on Monday 11 March 2019, in Murray Edwards College, Cambridge CB3 0DF*

Note emergency motions will be accepted up to the point the meeting is called to order by emailing [vice-president@gradunion.cam.ac.uk](mailto:vice-president@gradunion.cam.ac.uk)

### **Agenda (Council)**

#### **1. Approval of the minutes of the previous Council meeting**

The unconfirmed minutes of the last Council meeting, held on 23 January 2019, are circulated for approval.

#### **2. Matters arising from the minutes of the previous Council meeting**

#### **3. Reports from Sabbatical Officers and Officers of the Executive Committee**

- A. President's report (*Written Report*)
- B. Vice-President's report (*Written Report*)
- C. Welfare and Rights' report (*Verbal*)

#### **4. Motions to council**

- a) Housing Working Group
- b) Colleges' Equality Champions Policy
- c) Rethinking funding from the Student Support Initiative
- d) Fair Conditions for Teaching Opportunities

#### **5. GU Lent Elections 2019**

## **6. Divestment Working Group update**

## **7. Emergency Motions**

The Council will consider any emergency motions submitted between the circulation of the Agenda and the start of the meeting.

## **8. Dates of upcoming meetings**

Easter Term (23 April to 14 June)

- 30 April 2019 (No change of time)
- 03 June 2019

Long Vacation

- 08 July 2019
- 02 September 2019

The next GU Council meeting will be held at Wolfson College.

## **9. Any other business**

Training sessions run during the Easter term 2018

# Graduate Union Council

23/01/19

19.00 at Seminar Room 1, Newnham Terrace, Darwin College, University of Cambridge

## Present:

Name	Title
Torkel Loman	MCR Vice-President, Girton College
Larder Bosch	MCR Vice-President, Gonville and Caius College
Andrea Paterlini	MCR Vice-President, Clare College
Jessica Tearney-Pearce	Samuel Butler Room President, St John's College
Tamzin Byrne	MCR President, Murray Edwards College
Andre Neto-Bredley	MCR Treasurer Fitzwilliam College
Marno Van Der Maas	Graduate Student Body Vice-President Clare Hall
Alberto Ippolito	Graduate Parlour External Representative, Pembroke College
Chris C. Davis	Student Association External Officer, Darwin College
Catherine Benlacqua	MCR President, Graduate Society, King's College

## In attendance:

Name	Title
Sofia Ropek Hewson	President
Mrittunjoy Guha Majumdar	Vice-President
Marios Christodoulides	Mature Undergraduate Officer
Alessandro Ceccarelli	LGBTQ+ Officer
Aastha Dahal	CR Vice-President, St Edmund's
Jenny Reiss	MCR Vice-President, Corpus Christi
Ahsan Memon	Open Portfolio Officer
Benjamin Scholfl	CR President, St Edmund's
Ali Chahine	General Manager
Lisa Derry	Students' Union Advice Service Manager

## **1. Welcome**

The Chair welcomed GU Council members to the Lent Term 1 meeting.

## **2. Lisa Déry, Manager, Students' Unions' Advice Service**

Lisa is delighted to attend and would like the Advice Service to be a regular contributor to GU meetings on student issues.

Her report covers the period 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018, during which time it supported 473 users , including 344 students, an increase of 26% since last year. The increase in support provided to students has grown by 107%, compared with 2014-15. Students from 31 Colleges sought support, with numbers ranging from 2 to 25 students in each College. 14 students were signposted and 2 were referred to JCR/MCR officers. Of the five students requiring the most support four were postgraduate students. Advisers provide generalist advice and signpost service users to specific services.

Between 1 July 2018 and 31 December 2018, 236 people accessed the service. 106 of those people were students: 123 PGs and 63 UGs. The service provided support to more PG students (56%) than undergraduate students (44%). Most of the PG students supported were PhD students.

PG students were supported in relation to financial, health and well-being, housing, legal, international, and general issues, and academic concerns, including supervisory matters, changing College, fitness to study, practice, extensions to deadlines and reasonable adjustments.

Of the 344 students accessing the service, 58 (17%) disclosed a disability. 132 service users (38%) disclosed a disability through the service, 26% were referred to the service by the University and 14% disclosed in referrals through their College, perhaps via a tutor.

31% of those seeking support for disability mentioned that mental health was an issue. Mental health is recognised as a disability in respect of studying over the duration of a degree. The proportion of home and EU students in this category was 50-50.

Only half the students disclosed their gender. Data collection may be an issue in this respect. There is a 24% gap between male and female students accessing the service. Less than 1% of service users identified as 'other'.

Most support was provided to UG students in their second and third years and to PG students in their first year.

Duration of support was from 5 minutes to 80-120 hours, with the most support given to those requiring assistance with the University's internal procedures, and where the process had been exhausted and matters were taken further. More support tends to be required for students seeking intermission. More time is required to support students who want to discuss, for instance, companies, change of College and exam review; to support disabled students; and to provide practical support for students for whom English is not their first language.

Some students sought support in more than five separate cases. PG students especially can face lots of challenges.

PG students sought support for issues relating to intermission, in particular, mental health and financial issues. 75% of students seeking support for mental health issues were PGs.

PhD students sought support for the following issues, in order of frequency: exam failure and registration, supervisory issues, intermission, financial hardship, complaints, mental health and deadlines.

Those seeking intermission and support in the disciplinary procedure are now eligible for the Financial Hardship Fund.

Important to note that Colleges fund pastoral work and the advice service (not MCRs/JCRs).

There are now 3 full-time equivalent advisers, an increase from the previous 2.6.

Steps are being taken to improve life for students, including the launch next year of workshops on mitigating circumstances and examination reviews on conduct of exams and related processes.

The advice service is keeping an eye on the College transfer process, the grievance procedure and supervisor issues. Students are terrified of making a complaint about a supervisor and the advice service wants to see how the process can be improved.

Note that elected Sabbatical Officers can feed into policy through engagement with the service.

President: The SUAS's work feeds into GU policy work and casework. If representatives' students need help, the advice service is there for them.

*Questions*

There is a worrying increase in numbers of postgraduates seeking help, and PGs are more dispersed throughout the University. Are PGs better at asking for help?

Lisa: Perhaps PGs identify less with Colleges and more prepared to seek independent advice. Information is more readily available in PG spaces. Perhaps the lives of PGs are more complex than those of undergraduates, with different responsibilities, leading them to need more advice. It is hard to know for sure.

It would help if there were more information on grounds for changing Colleges.

Lisa: The grounds for changing are strict, including irretrievable breakdown in relationship between student and College - and this can be tricky if the College does not agree that this is so; sexual assault; and disability. Challenges can be made. Once the committee or panel asks a College to take students, sometimes decisions are not transparent and can appear inappropriate.

The Chair thanked Lisa for her presentation.

## **2. Declarations of interest**

There were also a number of UCU members present, including the President and Vice-President

## **3. Approval of the minutes of the previous Council meeting**

The Council approved the minutes of the previous meeting, held on 3 December 2018.

## **4. Matters arising from the minutes of the previous Council meeting**

No matters arising.

## **5. Reports from Sabbatical Officers and Officers of the Executive Committee**

### **a. President's report**

The President thanked Ali for the pizza party won by St Catherine's MCR, by having 33% of their members fill in the Mental Health Survey.

- i. GU Mental Health Survey launched, with 1,805 responses received, and the report is being prepared.
- ii. Proposed increase in the graduate application fee has been reduced by £15, in light of financial pressures on students.
- iii. Co-authored a paper on introducing application fee waivers for low-income prospective students with the Director of Admissions, and this is currently in progress.
- iv. Introduced a new GU Campaigning Budget.
- v. Launched two GU working groups on Brexit and Mental Health.
- vi. Championed postgraduate rights and lobbied for postgraduate policy changes on 40 University committees and working groups.
- vii. Ran successful discussion events on postgraduate mental health.
- viii. Established a memorandum of understanding with UCU and CUSU.
- ix. Ran GU fresher's events and reached thousands of postgraduate.
- x. Ensured that postgraduate widening participation is part of the University's Student Support Initiative - a £500 million fundraising campaign, which includes £300 million for postgraduate studentships.
- xi. Launched a GU strategic review to ensure the best possible representation of postgraduate students.
- xii. Joined up with members of the Cambridge Centre for Teaching and Learning to research student-supervisor relationships and power imbalances.
- xiii. Ensured that Breaking the Silence policy on staff-student relationships and power imbalances was communicated new supervisors.
- xiv. Established joint committees with CUSU and SUAS to enable better shared working
- xv. Ran the GU Michaelmas elections, had increased postgraduate engagement and elected a new Executive Committee.
- xvi. Worked with general committees, including on the draft education strategy - the first such strategy in the University.

**b. Vice-President's report**

- i. Was looking for more engagement with students, MCRs/JCRs, the City Council and local residents
- ii. Ran the first graduate open forum, Engaged in discussions on affordable housing
- iv. Started work on hidden charges in colleges
- v. Producing a welfare handbook with assistance from SUAS.
- vi. Worked with general committees.

**c. Marios Christodoulides, Mature Undergraduate Officer**

- i. Ran various social events
- ii. Ran events for mature students at Lucy Cavendish and St Edmunds

**d. Alessandro Ceccarelli, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and + Officer (LGBTQ+)**

- i. Ran various events as GU representative with students at Clare and Pembroke
- ii. Worked with the Encompass Network and Queers in Shorts

**e. Elly Tai, International Officer**

The President noted that Elly is meeting with the University's international team.

**f. Frédérique Fardin, Environmental Officer**

The President noted that Frédérique is organising the University's first Green Week.

**g. Christine Pungong, GU/CUSU Welfare and Rights Officer**

Had sent her apologies. The President reminded the Council that the Welfare and Rights Officer is currently preparing a written report for the Our Streets project on the history of women and non-binary students.

### *Questions*

What is being done about application fee waivers?

President: Looking to expand the list, because it can still be a problem if a student is not on the list of countries. This can also be a barrier to UK students.

Is household income a good enough basis to work on? Should it be family income?

President: Looking at options. Can't use postcodes because addresses might not be representative. In the US there are fee waivers for particular programmes and courses. Income stated on UCAS form might be useful. PGs are more difficult to target.

What is the purpose of the education strategy? What lack is it a remedy for?

President: It will connect existing work and strategies on the learning environment and curriculums.

Regarding the education strategy, there is concern about increasing access to remote learning and the increasing number of Institute of Continuing Education courses as an income generator for the University. Worry that new courses are being funnelled through the ICE, and that MPhils might be devalued by high-value, low-effort MAs. Can we have a copy of the education strategy?

President: I have brought up this issue with people in the University. Oxford has 300 PG studentships and an increase of 900 PGs. Will try to get the focus on student numbers from the strategy. I will find out whether I can share the strategy.

In responding to a question, the President agreed to provide LGBTQ+ contacts for work at King's.

## **6. Motions to Council**

### **a. Gender-neutral policy**

The following motion was put to Council: *That the Graduate Union promote gender neutral spaces and practices*

Introduced by Alessandro Ceccarelli, GU LGBTQ+ Officer.

He stated that it was important that in the University there should be greater sensitivity to and awareness of gender-neutral friendly spaces and practices.

In reply to a question, the President suggested that there be further discussion about College get-arounds, for example, in relation to provision of toilet facilities.

This was amended to include in 'GU Council resolves':

*8. To work with the university to develop gender-neutral parenting facilities*

The motion, as amended, was passed unanimously.

### **b. Fair pay and supporting the UCU strikes**

The following motion was put to Council: *To support fair pay and UCU strikes*

Introduced by Mrittunjoy Guha Majumdar, Vice-President

He noted that we depend on the support of those teaching us and in administrative roles, including TES employees. The UCU seeks industrial action and the membership of our union is affected, because one of our core aims is to support the education of graduates and postgraduates. The vote is running till 22 February and the matter is not yet decided.

President: There are concerns about crossing the picket line for lectures and laboratory work. You can support the strike in different ways, including discussions, events and emails to the University, and so on.

In reply to questions, the President confirmed that we are obliged to protect people who have to cross a picket line; that that we recognise the right to work and for UCU to minimise impact, which includes impact on and financial implications relating to supervision meetings, for example; that any student has the right not to observe the strike; and that she is attending a meeting on casualisation of University teaching staff.

It was amended to change point 6(a) in 'GU Council notes':

*6. a) To make provisions to mitigate the negative impact of disruption on CUSU members while not undermining the industrial action, and to encourage those supporting industrial action to take account of people's daily responsibilities and welfare*

And amended to add point 6(c) in 'GU Council notes':

*6. c) To recognise the right for all members to access University buildings and facilities*

And amended to replace point 8 in 'GU Council notes':

*8. GU members are also UCU members and may be employed by the University and Colleges.*

The motion, as amended, was passed unanimously.

### **c. To support students protesting against Toby Jackman Newton Trust JRF appointment**

The following motion was put to Council: *To support St Edmund's students on on Toby Jackman Newton Trust JRF appointment*

They noted that it is important to raise awareness about this matter, because it relates to academic standards, possible conflicts of interest and College procedures that are not transparent. The complaint process has been followed and the College has not engaged with the process, providing either no responses or responses after deadlines.

It was amended to change 'GU Council believes':

1. *That the open letter signed by hundreds of senior academics is a reliable evaluation of the work of Dr Carl.*

And it was amended to change 'GU Council resolves':

1. *To support the students of St. Edmund's College in any way necessary to achieve a fair and balanced investigation into the processes that lead to this selection*
2. *To support the students of St. Edmund's College in any way necessary to achieve a fair and balanced investigation into the current holder of the JRF;*
3. *To lobby the University to take a clear stance on the matter;*
4. *To raise public awareness about the perceived comeback of race sciences in Cambridge;*
5. *To promote the resources and support available to GU members affected by this matter.*

The motion, as amended, was passed.

#### **d. By-law amendment on balloting**

The following motion was put to Council: *To remove the requirement for paper ballots.*

Introduced by Mr. Mrittunjoy Guha Majumdar, Vice-President

The motion was passed.

## 7. Lent term elections

Schedule E of the by-laws states that the President, as well as the Welfare and Rights Officer shall usually be delegated to the CUSU elections committee. Council may also delegate other elections to the CUSU elections committee, provided that the GU President (or other person acting as Returning Officer) have some form of vote on the committee. Council is asked to delegate the running of the election to the Cambridge University Students' Union Election Committee, and asks the President, acting as Returning Officer is a member.

Graduate Union positions during this election will be:

1. President (start date of 1st July)
2. Welfare and Rights Officer (start date of 1st July)
3. Disabled Students Officer (from Easter Term)
4. Faculty Liaison Officer (from Easter Term)
5. Open Portfolio Officer (from Easter Term)

The executive committee will open nominations for student trustees at the meeting on 11 March for co-option at the April meeting 30th April. The Executive committee currently suggests two students to fill the student trustee position, for one year from 1 October 2019 to 1 October 2020.

The President reminded the Council that a campaign budget was now available. She encouraged all GU members to run, and for them to encourage others to run. It would be good to have a PG candidate this time.

This was passed unanimously.

## 8. Brexit Working Group update

Aim 1: the BWG serves to disseminate information to GU members relating to Brexit. In this regard it is working on an infographic for publicity and is engaging with the University, liaising through GU members, including the President. Further information is likely to be distributed in early March.

Aim 2: The BWG allows for student communication with the University's EU Strategy Group through the GU President's membership. The BWG has a University presence and an impact on its preparations for Brexit.

Aim 3. The BWG should run events which allow for discussion with affected members. It meets regularly and all members are open to GU members. It is likely that open events will be organised in future months. Students may raise concerns in Q&A sessions at the end of these events.

#### **9. Discussion on self-care and welfare provisions for MCR Officers and Student Unions' Officers.**

What practical strategies do GU members have for coping?

Members suggest various ways: focus on PhD work; don't attend all social events; engage and attend certain events, with the aim of having fun; keep things in perspective, because you're not responsible for all events; share workload with your GU team; don't say yes to everything; and signpost students to people and services. It was agreed to discuss this further.

#### **10. Date, time and location of next meeting**

11 March 2019, <not known>

#### **11. Any other business**

None.

Meeting closed at 21:05.

#### **Actions**

1. President agreed to provide LGBTQ+ contacts for work at King's.
2. President to see if Education Strategy available for circulation
3. President to discuss with colleagues about "college get-rounds" of gender neutral toilet facilities
4. Discuss ways for MCR Presidents to share good practice in roles

Motions passed

## Gender Neutral Policy

### GU Council notes:

1. That in the 2018 Big Cambridge LGBT+ Survey organised by CUSU LGBT+, out of 400 respondents, 71 identified as trans or non-binary
2. That gender-neutral bathrooms are not widely available in University and college buildings
3. That when applying for graduate study, applicants are not able to record that they are non-binary, and administrative processes rarely allow for non-binary gender options
4. That some members feel uncomfortable attending formal halls and graduations due to gendered dress codes

### GU Council believes:

1. That the University should be a welcoming place for our trans and non-binary members

### GU Council resolves:

1. To support students when they encounter gendered policies
2. To update and circulate maps of gender-neutral bathrooms (see Blaxter 2018)
3. To gather more information about gender-neutral provisions across departments, institutes and colleges
4. To campaign for gender-neutral provisions in all University and college buildings
5. To promote opportunities for gender-neutral sport
6. To request gender-neutral titles at the point of application
7. To work with the University to develop gender-neutral policies
8. *To work with the university to develop gender-neutral parenting facilities*

## Motion on Fair Pay and Supporting UCU Strikes

### GU Council Notes:

1. The University and College Union (UCU) is conducting a ballot of its members on industrial action, which opened on 15th January and will close on 22nd February 2019;
2. The ballot relates to a claim jointly lodged by the five higher education trade unions (Unison, Unite, GMB, EIS and UCU) in March 2018 on the issues of pay, equality, workload and precarious contracts;
3. Staff across the UK HE sector have suffered a cumulative real terms pay cut of over 17% since 2009;
4. There are large and persistent gender pay gaps across UK universities, with disparities in excess of 15% across Russell Group institutions;
5. A 2016 survey of UCU members found that academic staff work an average of 50.9 hours FTE per week;
6. Early career academics and postgraduate research students are often employed on hourly-paid contracts which limit their rights as workers and provide little security of employment;
7. UCU members engaged in industrial action over a dispute on the USS pension scheme during Lent Term 2018 with strong student support, including from CUSU;
8. *GU members are also UCU members and may be employed by the University and Colleges.*
9. At the Michaelmas I 2018 Council, GU Council resolved to adopt a Memorandum of Understanding with CUSU and Cambridge UCU, which said:  
*The unions' interests are aligned: staff working conditions are the conditions in which students learn. They also represent the current and future working conditions of many students: postgraduate students in particular are often both staff and students. A university education is a collaborative relationship between staff and students and each benefits from the advancement of the other's interest.*

### GU Council believes:

1. Staff have a right to fair pay and fair treatment;
2. Many of the issues at stake in the dispute, including precarious contracts, disproportionately affect postgraduate research students who are GU members;
3. Students benefit from working with and being taught by staff who are fairly paid, have job security, and are not forced to take on an excessive workload;
4. Student support for the 2018 UCU industrial action on pensions had a significant
5. Impact on both the success and impact of those strike, and the increased collaboration between GU, CUSU and Cambridge UCU that followed it has benefitted all three unions;
6. The decline in staff pay and conditions is directly linked to the marketisation of higher education, as the current funding system dis-incentivises universities from adequately funding their staff.

### GU Council resolves:

1. In the event that the ballot is successful, to fully and publicly support staff in their upcoming strike action and action short of a strike;
2. To lobby the university to provide fair pay and conditions to its employees;
3. To educate and inform students about the ballot, any subsequent industrial action, and GU's stance;
4. To support the ongoing ballot by sharing materials relating to UCU's Get Out the Vote effort on GU's social media and the GU bulletin;
5. To mandate the GU executive to engage with Cambridge UCU and other trade unions during the period of the ballot and potential future industrial action on this dispute, and to support those trades unions as the executive see fit;
6. And, should the ballot result in industrial action:
  - a) *To make provisions to mitigate the negative impact of disruption on CUSU members while not undermining the industrial action, and to encourage those supporting industrial action to take account of people's daily responsibilities and welfare*

b) To encourage students to show solidarity by where possible not attending lectures, seminars or other university-organised activity still in operation on strike days.

*c) To recognise the right for all members to access University buildings and facilities*

7. Should the ballot not result in industrial action, the GU council empowers the GU Executive Committee to look at ways to take steps to address the issue of fair pay and employment in the University. This may include having consultation with UCU on action just short of a strike as well as awareness building and knowledge dissemination steps.

## Motion to support St. Edmund's College CR on the matter of the Toby Jackman Newton Trust JRF

### GU Council Notes:

1. That in a hiring process with over 1000 applicants, St. Edmund's College selected Dr. Noah Carl for the Toby Jackman Newton Trust JRF;
2. That Dr. Carl has published articles in the discredited race sciences, linking genetics and intelligence (exemplary <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs40806-018-0152-x> );
3. That the works of Dr. Carl are publicly accessible by all members of the university on his research gate ([https://www.researchgate.net/scientific-contributions/2047758092\\_Noah\\_Carl](https://www.researchgate.net/scientific-contributions/2047758092_Noah_Carl) );
4. That Dr. Carl participated in the London Conference of Eugenics, hosted at UCL;
5. That Dr. Carl published a major part of his work in the non peer-reviewed journal "open psych";
6. That there was an open letter initiated and signed by hundreds of senior academics, that supports the view that Dr. Carl's research is unethical and flawed, and that calls for an investigation into the matter by the college. *That the open letter signed by hundreds of senior academics is a reliable evaluation of the work of Dr Carl.* (<https://medium.com/@racescienceopenletter/open-letter-no-to-racist-pseudoscience-at-cambridge-472e1a7c6dca> )
7. That St. Edmund's College has initiated an HR process to investigate into the works of the academic
8. That the college has only done so after repeated requests from a major part of the college's student body;
9. That the panel chosen to conduct the investigation is not representative (no person of colour, no social scientist on the panel), and that there is no evidence provided to show that the panel is credible to conduct the investigation in a fair and balanced way.

### GU Council Believes:

1. That the open letter signed by hundreds of senior academics is a reliable evaluation of the works of Dr. Carl;
2. That research in the discredited race sciences, that can be used as foundational arguments for racist policy making should not be supported by a Cambridge College;
3. That students of all Cambridge colleges should support the students of St. Edmund's College in their endeavour to prevent this University from becoming a safe haven for race sciences.

### GU Council Resolves:

1. *To support the students of St. Edmund's College in any way necessary to achieve a fair and balanced investigation into the processes that lead to this selection*
2. *To support the students of St. Edmund's College in any way necessary to achieve a fair and balanced investigation into the current holder of the JRF;*
3. *To lobby the University to take a clear stance on the matter;*
4. *To raise public awareness about the perceived comeback of race sciences in Cambridge;*
5. *To promote the resources and support available to GU members affected by this matter.*

## 3 a) President's Report

### *Lent 2019 Application fee waivers, background and outcome:*

Last summer, the Admissions Office proposed increasing the graduate application fee to £75. I strongly opposed this increase at my first Board of Graduate Studies meeting, and in a General Board meeting. The Graduate Union Council also passed a motion opposing this fifty percent increase. The proposed increase was a practical and symbolic barrier to access: it symbolised a disconnect between the University and young people not earning much money. For example, weekly Jobseeker's Allowance for people under the age of 24 is £57.90. Prospective postgraduates apply to multiple universities and could pay around £60 each time; prospective undergraduates, in comparison, pay £24 for five applications. Diverse undergraduate access is viewed as a priority, but this proposal indicated that postgraduate access wasn't valued in similar terms. It also highlighted a disparity between how the University treats postgraduate students and undergraduate students. The new Student Support Initiative proposes £300 million in studentships for postgraduates, but the University needs to consider whether a diverse range of people will be able to access them.

I made the arguments above at various committees, and General Board agreed that the fee would not be increased to £75 this year, but more modestly increased in the medium term, and also agreed that we needed fee waivers in place for British applicants who were unable to afford the fees, and for applicants with refugee status.

The Director of Admissions, the Head of Graduate Admissions and I wrote a paper and presented it to the Postgraduate Admissions Committee recently, where it was approved. I also proposed a paper on including a non-binary option on the application form, among other suggestions, which was approved. Initially, fee waivers will be offered to those who had recorded household income of £25,000 or below when they applied for their undergraduate student loans. Fee waivers will also be in place for refugees and people with allied status. There are currently international fee waivers in place for some countries, but that list will also be reviewed and altered, in line with the UN's list of low-income countries. Assessing need at postgraduate level is more complex than for undergraduate students, but Professor Paul Wakeling, who works on postgraduate widening participation at York, agrees that the method we've proposed is likely to be effective, and addresses a significant barrier to access.

This is an important step, but if the University is serious about increasing its postgraduate numbers, and raising significant amounts of money for postgraduate scholarships through the Student Support Initiative, then it needs to consider postgraduate access more thoroughly. We need to bring together existing postgraduate access programmes happening locally across the University, we need to research what might work at Cambridge, and we need an ambitious and well-funded pilot programme - with follow-up research. We need a joined-up Financial Aid Office, ideally. We also don't have much time. It's really exciting that the University has raised £79 million for postgraduate studentships, but that money won't be distributed to those in need of support, or with postgraduate access in mind.

### ***Postgraduate Feedback and Reporting:***

I'm a member of the Postgraduate Feedback and Reporting Project Board and User Group. We've worked on developing self-evaluation reports for postgraduate students, and 'raise a concern' reports. We're currently struggling with the 'raise a concern' report and its function. I've argued for a reporting system that allows students to report bullying/other problems with supervisors, but the report is currently sent to graduate administrators, supervisors and graduate tutors, so, practically, students won't use the form to report a very common problem. Feedback/suggestions very welcome!

### ***Student Support Initiative:***

The Student Support Initiative has raised £79 million for postgraduate studentships, some of which will begin to be distributed this year. Although this money will help postgraduate students, the funds are not targeted at those in financial need – as the Student Support Initiative aims/mission promise. I'm currently writing a proposal for an initial research project/pilot programme on postgraduate widening participation, in order to bridge this gap. I'm concerned that unless research and pilot programmes begin soon, the £300 million proposed to be raised won't address postgraduate access issues at Cambridge.

### ***Postgraduate numbers increases:***

Across the University, I've been aware that discussions are developing around increasing postgraduate numbers. There are financial incentives for the University in this area, but any increases must include increases in welfare provisions for students – an increase in funding for the University Counselling Service and the Disability Resource Centre, for example, along with increases in affordable housing and housing for students with families. I've asked to be part of a group discussing postgraduate numbers and will provide an update at the next Council.

### ***Campaigns Fund:***

A GU Campaigns Fund of £1000 has been set up to help students with important campaigning work. Applications can be made by any GU member for funding for campaigning work in collaboration with the GU. This fund aims to increase the capacity of the GU and its members to engage in campaigning work and effect change across the University. Please encourage your members to apply to this fund, if they need campaigning support:

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe9Xrhym2V6jLrSozEIXZ-lpAWfqNgeeyK7CmkrKB\\_EsA/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe9Xrhym2V6jLrSozEIXZ-lpAWfqNgeeyK7CmkrKB_EsA/viewform)

### ***Graduate Tutors:***

The Registry and I are currently collecting information on numbers of graduate tutors and numbers of students allocated to each tutor, ways they engage their students and any signposting/helpful guidance documents that they would be happy to share with other tutors. I'm currently concerned that at many colleges, there are often between a hundred and three hundred students to each tutor. I'll then be preparing a report on graduate tutor

numbers/engagement strategies and collating a good practice document for graduate tutors. I'm also interested in finding out how much graduate tutors are paid, in comparison with undergraduate tutors – and whether graduate/undergraduate tutor work is included in workload models. Mental Health Report: Following our survey last term, I've prepared a mental health report, which is with our Communications Manager for design work, before we release it. Headlines are sad but unsurprising, and include: isolation and loneliness are prevalent, supervisors are often unable to signpost to welfare services, and structural problems are common – for example, problems relating to housing, finances and administration. Any questions/concerns, please email: [president@gradunion.cam.ac.uk](mailto:president@gradunion.cam.ac.uk).

## 3 b) Vice-President's Report

### *Housing and Living Expenses Campaign:*

In the beginning of this term, I initiated a GU campaign on housing and living expenses. Two articles (one an opinion piece: <https://www.varsity.co.uk/opinion/17149> and the other a news piece: <https://www.varsity.co.uk/news/17159>) were published in Varsity to increase awareness of the realities of housing and to increase engagement with the wider student body about this. We obtained an early win in the Phased Deposit scheme for private providers who advertise with the University Accommodation Centre to distribute the deposit for a room over three months instead of having it upfront. After our recent strategy meeting on housing and living expenses, there are two specific things we aim for in the next few weeks:

1. Development and distribution of a **Housing Toolkit** for MCRs to inform them about some of the realities of Housing throughout the Collegiate University, the ways in which they can campaign and lobby in their colleges for this, and to receive information from their membership pertaining to any important aspect of housing and living expenses, which may be shared with the larger campaign. The Toolkit has recently been developed and is currently under review for final changes before distribution to the MCRs.
2. Lobbying for transparency in housing and living expenses by informing prospective students seeking affiliation with a college the following key questions
  - Number and kinds of rooms available
  - Rent range
  - System of allocation of rooms
  - Miscellaneous (or Hidden) charges

This will help the students make an informed choice regarding their college. This shall be undertaken with the MCRs. This is mentioned in the Housing and Living Expenses Toolkit as well.

Engagement with the students is key to what we do. As part of our new engagement policy, I initiated engagement drop-in sessions and covered the following places around the University

1. Darwin College
2. Clare Hall College
3. Girton College (Swirle's Court)
4. West Café
5. Grad Café, University Centre
6. The Buttery

We got a very encouraging response from students on topics varying from Brexit, housing and living expenses and welfare to academic welfare and divestment. As part of our review strategy, we came to two conclusions for the next phase of this policy

1. It is good to work in collaboration with the MCR in organization and publicity since that makes it more widely known than just having a spontaneous drop-in session.
2. The location of the stall has to be strategically decided, along with the time, since we would like the maximum number of students to benefit from these sessions.

Elections are a special time for engagement for the Union, and I have used this to do the same by

1. Speaking to students to vote and engage at New Museum Site and Sidgwick Site
2. Flyering at King's College, Gonville and Caius College, Pembroke College, Peterhouse, Trinity College, St. John's College, the Cambridge Union, Sidney Sussex College and Christs College.
3. Interacting with various MCR Presidents to encourage their membership to vote and engage.
4. Involving the Faculty Reps to encourage students in their respective faculties to vote.

Our weekly bulletins have also helped in engagement and have received direct responses from members of the Graduate Union on topics varying from the Student Support Initiative to international student concerns.

*Sustaining the Graduate Rights Campaign*

After having consultations with students across the University including a few one-to-one sessions, it has come to light that there are many in the University who are still not entirely aware or sure of their rights within the Collegiate University.

Last year the Graduate Union may have obtained a win with the signing of the first page of the Code of Practice by supervisor and supervisee, but the implementation and follow-up supplementary actions and steps still needs to be looked into and worked on. I have had initial meetings on strategizing on this and we look forward to sustaining the campaign.

An early point that has come from these discussions is having workshops on graduate rights in collaboration with departments across the University, with the help of the University Counselling Service.

### ***Personal Welfare Handbook***

I have been working on the Personal Welfare Handbook for students for the past six months and it is now in the final stages of review. I look forward to sharing this helpful and utilitarian document that is primarily for signposting to relevant welfare and access support for various issues and topics for postgraduate and mature undergraduate students.

### ***Meeting with Prof. Graham Virgo***

I recently met Prof. Graham Virgo for a one-to-one chat on a number of topics that we are interested in or are campaigning on. These are the key points that came out of my meeting with Prof. Graham Virgo, Pro-Vice Chancellor for Education, University of Cambridge:

2. We had a discussion on a tiered feedback and complaint redressal system for postgraduate research students. Prof. Virgo mentioned that with a combination of formal and informal processes in place, the Collegiate University does just that. Then the question is on making students more aware of those and encouraging them to seek help and support as and when required. Often due to the cultural differences when it comes to teacher-student dynamics in their home-countries and the UK, the students do not avail the provisions in place. This can be addressed and worked on in a collaborative project between the Graduate Union and the University, particularly Prof. Virgo, as suggested by him. This can also tie into our existing Graduate Rights Campaign.

3. We had a discussion on accommodation and transparency. My specific demand was for the colleges to make available information on the kinds of rooms available, number of rooms of each kind and price range, system for room allocation and any additional charges, over basic room rent. He said he will be talking to Mark Warmold about this. I shall be following up on this with Prof. Virgo and Prof. Warmold as part of the GU Housing Campaign.
4. We had a discussion on College Prevent Committees and the inclusion of BME and student representatives on the same. He mentioned that the University Prevent Committee has student representatives from GU and CUSU, and the hope is that the colleges will take that model as a precedent. We also discussed about the blueprint for the questionnaire that is given to colleges for Prevent duty-related tasks and surveillance. He mentioned that he shall discuss about the BME and student representation on College Prevent Committees with Prof. Mark Warmold. We could also look into working with the University's Prevent Coordinator Dr. James Knapton more closely on this.
5. We discussed about the St. Edmund's College Fellowship appointment of Dr. Noah Carl and how this could tie into a bigger question of screening of candidates and the flagging of diversity and/or equality related concerns when it comes to academic appointments, particularly within colleges. Due to the University of Cambridge being a Collegiate University, the University cannot direct colleges in any way. Therefore, he suggested that I work closely with the Equality and Diversity Committee to have a wider consultation. Later in the day, Alice Benton mentioned that I could also work with the Committee of Directors of Human Resource in colleges.

Prof. Graham Virgo graciously offered to be an independent adjudicator in the review panel of St. Edmund's College if he is invited for the same, and he felt that the Graduate Union along with the students of the college could put forth such a request, possibly and hopefully leading to such an invitation by the college.

### ***Societies-related Suggestions***

Representing the Union on the Societies Syndicate, I gave two specific suggestions to the Societies Syndicate that were accepted:

1. A sustainability index for societies that looks at income, assets and expenditure of societies to have an index to gauge their sustainability
2. A central pool of resources for the societies housed in the Graduate Union (this could include music equipments or sports equipments)

### ***Updates from Executive Committee***

I have chaired an executive committee meeting since the last Council and have been working closely with them. I have received the following updates and plans from my executive committee

#### ***Faculty Liaison Officer***

I would like to establish greater cooperation and collaboration across the university regarding academic welfare and activities. I have already designed an assessment form to be sent out to department representatives and shall be establishing contact with them, besides assembling my GU Faculty Liaison Working Group. If you are interested in the same or discussing about my position, please feel free to contact [faculties@gradunion.cam.ac.uk](mailto:faculties@gradunion.cam.ac.uk)

#### ***Womens' Officer***

I have begun my term by looking into existing GU policy in this area and discussing this with the VP. I aim to work on building a Union campaign around the GU policy to support the UN HeForShe campaign. I look forward to doing this with MCR Womens' Officers and my working group, which is open for everyone interested in helping me in this. You can contact me at [womens@gradunion.cam.ac.uk](mailto:womens@gradunion.cam.ac.uk)

#### ***Mature Undergraduate Officer***

I have been organizing a number of events such as Mature Undergraduate formal swaps, desserts' parties and social nights in various colleges. I have been got in touch with the Senior Tutors of the four Mature colleges to persuade them to undertake similar events. If you want to join my working group or help with my campaign, please write to me at [mature@gradunion.cam.ac.uk](mailto:mature@gradunion.cam.ac.uk)

#### ***LGBTQ+ Officer***

I have recently helped passed a Gender Neutral policy in the GU council. I have been working with a number of colleges and independent organizations such as Queers in Shorts to organize events such as LGBTQ+ Yoga in the Graduate Union. To join my Working Group or discuss with me about my campaigns/events, feel free to write to me at [lgbtq@gradunion.cam.ac.uk](mailto:lgbtq@gradunion.cam.ac.uk)

#### ***International Officer***

I recently organized the International induction event with Anthony Dangerfield (Cambridge University International Team) and Mrittunjoy. I am campaigning for a more efficient and quicker system for the issuing of CAS numbers to students, particularly international students. To join my working group or discuss about my campaign, you can write to [international@gradunion.cam.ac.uk](mailto:international@gradunion.cam.ac.uk)

### ***BME Officer***

I began my term with a well-attended BME Movie Night (and discussion forum) with the movie 'Udhta Punjab', which is on youth and drugs in India. I also helped promote a Nigerian movie night and plan to host a GU BME Formal, tentatively at Wolfson College. If you are interested in joining my working group or want to mention about specific ideas or proposals, please feel free to write to [bme@gradunion.cam.ac.uk](mailto:bme@gradunion.cam.ac.uk)

### ***Disabled Students' Officer***

I have been working closely with the CUSU Disabled Students' team and am campaigning for departments to present information at graduate induction events on how students with disabilities can access support during their course. If you want to join my working group or help me with my campaign otherwise, please feel free to contact me at [disabled@gradunion.cam.ac.uk](mailto:disabled@gradunion.cam.ac.uk)

### ***Environmental Officer***

I have worked to promote the Cambridge University Green Week to the membership of the Graduate Union. I will also be joining the recently-convened GU Divestment Working Group and helping frame campaign points and policy suggestions on the platform. If you want to join my working group, write to [environment@gradunion.cam.ac.uk](mailto:environment@gradunion.cam.ac.uk)

### ***Families Officer***

I have been looking at ways to making the University a more childcare-friendly workplace. I am working with the University Childcare Services and will be looking at more facilities for students with family when it comes to housing and finances. If you want to join my working group, write to [families@gradunion.cam.ac.uk](mailto:families@gradunion.cam.ac.uk)

### ***Open Portfolio Officer***

I am running a campaign against Prevent. We are looking at ways to support the GU Council Policy on the same and into ways of reducing the negative impact of College Prevent policies on postgraduate students. If you want to join the GU Open Portfolio (Prevent) Working Group, you can write to [vice-president@gradunion.cam.ac.uk](mailto:vice-president@gradunion.cam.ac.uk)

## 4 a) Motion on Housing and Living Expenses

**Proposer:** Mrityunjay Guha Majumdar, Vice-President, Graduate Union

**Seconder:** Sofia Ropek-Hewson, President, Graduate Union

**Motion:**

The GU resolves

1. To create a GU Housing Working Group to closely look into areas of concern relating to accommodation within the Collegiate University, and to develop a strategy for campaigning for more accessibility and transparency on housing and living expenses.
2. To work with MCRs to learn about, and campaign on, housing concerns within colleges, particularly with the help of an MCR Housing Toolkit and the Working Group.
3. To lobby for greater transparency by colleges on making available
  - a. The kinds and numbers of rooms available
  - b. Rent ranges
  - c. System of allocation of rooms
  - d. Miscellaneous and/or hidden chargesto prospective students applying for affiliation with a college.

# Standing Up for Affordable Postgraduate Housing sans Hidden Charges in Cambridge

*Mrittunjoy Guha Majumdar*

Housing is one of the more important aspects of a student's university experience. In Cambridge, while undergraduate housing has been a point of wide-spread debate and discussion as part of 'Cut the Rent' campaigns across the country, postgraduate housing has often not been given as much attention. The basic pay that can be charged for housing facilities is seen to be cushioned by hidden charges in various institutions. This may relate to internet charges, kitchen charges or other miscellaneous charges, which the student need not pay but ends up doing so, for convenience of living. The issue of hidden charges is part of a much larger problem that relates to university accommodation facilities for students. The National Union of Students (NUS), along with Unipol, recently compiled data for 382,837 rooms, and found some worrying discoveries from their study [1]. The overall average weekly rent stands at £147 in 2018-19, with the average annual rent being £6,366, across university and private housing providers. On average, a student tenant signing up for a full contract in this year would have paid £376 more than for an equivalent accommodation in the previous year.

The Collegiate University provides for the major portion of housing in Cambridge, along with private housing providers. Recently RH Partnership Architects picked up the University Halls of Residence of the Year award at the *Property Week's* third annual Student Accommodation Awards for its Swirles Court development at Girton College, University of Cambridge [2]. The laurels, however, do not show the complete picture, with many of the rooms being quite expensive. The kinds and numbers of rooms in Cambridge have changed significantly over the years, between the three primary stock types: standard self-catered, en-suite self-catered and studio flats . All over the UK, the NUS-Unipol Survey 2018 found that self-catered en-suite accommodation account for the most number of rooms, amounting to 58% of total rooms in the survey. Self-catered standard rooms with shared facilities have declined from 24% in 2012-2013 to 17% in 2018-2019, while the numbers of standard rooms offered with catering packages have fallen from 6% to 4% cent of purpose-built accommodation.

It is the decline in standard stock, which is priced within an affordable range, which is arguably the largest cause of concern for the student housing sector in the UK. On the other hand, studio rooms have increased by 123% and more than doubled their profile as a proportion of the stock of rooms in the UK since 2012-13. This is primarily due to strong developer interests and investor appetite. Studio rooms are expensive, with privately provided studios being £4,442 more expensive than studio rooms provided by the institutional sector, on average. Since many postgraduate students in Cambridge, in particular, and the UK, in general, are international students, such financial encumbrances create problems for those either self-funded or partially funded by a government or private entity. Given the significant financial underperformance, primarily due to lack of interest from a large number of students in such rooms, further studio development is not needed, especially since studios occupy key building sites that could be used to house many more students with potential standard stock rooms.

It has been a NUS policy that, outside London, they shall speak up for an 'affordable' rent for accommodation is no more than 50% of the maximum amount of student finance available in England and that housing providers should ensure that at least a quarter of their rooms sit within this cap. At the moment, the institutional sector falls 3% short of meeting this target, and private providers achieve only 7% on this front. A ray of hope is that some service providers do mention that affordability is on their agenda, and they have looked into options such as freezing prices, letting rooms out in the summer for added revenue and bursaries for low-income students. However, this number is very small: only 34% of institutions and 23% of private providers currently have an affordability policy. The number of service-providers who look into other forms of special needs, besides the financial ones, such as disability provisions (albeit the providers, particularly institutions, did well on having provisions for cases with ambulatory disabilities) and welfare support, are also less, with 26% reporting outright that they do not offer any specialist or alternative accommodation types, including adapted or adaptable rooms, single-sex halls, accommodation for families, alcohol-free halls, quiet blocks and safeguarding accommodation. In this regard, mental health has been something that the institutions have done far better than private student housing providers, with institutions leading the way in increasing mental health first aid training, student service referrals and support from dedicated staff. Given that 49% of housing providers do not involve students in the rent setting process to any extent, it is not a surprise that the housing providers are unaware of the realities faced by the students and the services they provide.

In Cambridge, the housing experience of postgraduate students depends on a number of factors: funding status, courses, college preferences and facilities, and pastoral care support. In the recent Cambridge Barometer survey, postgraduate students were satisfied with surroundings outside their institutions, general safety and security, and quality of external campus environment, all with 97% satisfaction [3]. What they seemed to be not too happy about included not having any pickup facilities upon arrival (66%), the cost of living (69%) and the cost of accommodation (67%) in the university. The Big Cambridge Survey 2018 gave similar results [4]. 45% of postgraduate students believed that they got their value for money while 41% postgraduate students did not with regards to accommodation provided to them by either their college or the University in Cambridge. 64% felt that they were satisfied with the quality of their accommodation while 27% did not. 51% were satisfied with their relationship with college/university on accommodation matters while 27% were not. 67% postgraduate students felt that the impact living in college/university has had on their student life had been positive while 18% did not. Most importantly, 43% of postgraduate students felt that the house prices in Cambridge were unfair while 34% did not. It is the places where charges were introduced without prior awareness of students that I feel is the first point of interest and action.

The 2017 report by the *Cambridge Centre for Housing & Planning Research* [6] for housing in Cambridge in the year 2015/16 showed that there were an estimated 46,132 students in Cambridge with a need for some form of accommodation, of which 22,410 were housed in purpose-built student accommodation, an estimated 9,157 were in shared housing, while 12,129 were in existing family housing, and there was no information available for 2,436 students. 55% of postgraduates at the University of Cambridge were found to live in University or College maintained accommodation, while 3,003 postgraduates were accommodated in shared existing housing. The most interesting part of the report, given that the University of Cambridge's current planning framework envisages an expansion in postgraduate numbers of 2% per year in the next ten years, was that 8,959 student rooms would need to be built in purpose-built student accommodation by 2026 if both the current and the future potential levels of student accommodation were to be met.

Student housing is a highly nuanced subject with increasing diversity of student housing needs. Research shows that the housing needs of students are very diverse both within and across different institutions. While undergraduate students may seek institutionally provided accommodation, there is a postgraduate population in Cambridge that may desire a more 'home-like' form of accommodation. For one, some college bursar's reports recently mentioned that students live rent free outside term time. This is not true for postgraduates since they pay per quarter and not per term, so they pay for full-time accommodation. Moreover, many graduate students are independent from their families or are unable to travel abroad during vacations. Even for those postgraduate students who travel in vacations, a year-long lease by colleges without provisions for letting the room during the time away can be debilitating. More importantly, most funded international students enter a 2+ year course with a fixed amount of funded across the years of funding, which often do not take into consideration the varying rent over the years. There not being rooms for students with varied needs and looking at student realities creates issues for students. One of the reasons this takes place is because student housing is often not considered to be a part of the wider housing market in the city. Since the number of students in the city is large and Cambridge University is so central to the city's economy, in future assessments of housing need, students should be treated more transparently as part of the overall housing need profile. After all, land allocation needs to balance the competing demands of the different groups within the city's overall housing market.

The current Cambridge Local Plan 2006 confirms that it is important that the Local Plan makes adequate provision for College and University of Cambridge residential needs. The Proposals Schedule and Proposals Map allocate a number of sites for student accommodation for both universities. However, today, privately-owned accommodation are often cheaper than university- or college-owned property, with a range of accommodation options at different prices, a point which reinforces the point about there still being a distance between the student needs and the overall housing profile considerations by the city. For instance, the Cambridge East Area Action Plan (adopted 2008) is supportive of student accommodation, but does not make any specific allocations for student accommodation.

Not only should student-housing be integrated in the overall housing profile and need of the city, but to ensure that the new housing solves the problems of the University, the proposed accommodation should be tied to the University, through either a long-term lease or long-term nomination agreement, much like the Lodge Property Services were asked to manage all properties at Eddington and are part of the University Accommodation Service. The system seems to work well where the details of the development are specified in partnership with an education institution, and is further strengthened where applications are made jointly. This is particularly important given that a sizeable number of postgraduate students are seen to not avail college-based housing. For example, more than 30% of postgraduates are not housed in University/College maintained accommodation at Queens', Hughes Hall, Wolfson, Darwin, Homerton and St Edmund's Colleges. Moreover, when asked about the plans for rate of expansion of accommodation, over the next 5-10 years, the colleges responded in a highly mixed manner, as shown in *Table 4* [6].

When the Colleges were asked about their thoughts on any changing demand in types of student accommodation, 16 colleges predicted an increasing demand for self-contained studio flats over the next five to ten years, while 8 Colleges thought demand would remain the same. The University needs to look at this more closely, since the demands of the students need to be ascertained properly. The general need for additional purpose-built accommodation services need to be in defined areas that are within walking or cycling distance of teaching facilities, thereby enabling efficiencies in transport and service provision. A move by the City Council to look into a comprehensive plan for accommodating all students in purpose-built student accommodation would not only alleviate the housing crisis for students but will also release the shared housing for the open market and potentially accommodating local residents.

To see the acute problem of how rents tie into the funding scene, we need to look at how the two compare in the University of Cambridge. Taking a single room rent range of £400-£740 per month (across the various colleges), most funding schemes listed in Table 5 have a stipend from which more than 50% of the stipend shall have to go through for the rent, with the most generous grant (the Gates Cambridge Trust scholarship) still hovering around the 40% mark (if the average of £570 is considered). Moreover, graduate students are found to have faced

unexpected, compulsory fees which are not accounted for in their funding. To make matters worse, while the University of Cambridge recommends that a full-time graduate student needs an absolute minimum of £14,130 for maintenance, most major funding bodies only offer this minimum, while a fair few offering slightly less.

The National Union of Students (NUS) recommends that rent should be below 50% of a student's funding. Colleges in Cambridge do not match that condition for graduate students. The University of Cambridge warns that the minimum maintenance amount does not include hidden costs such as bench fees, laboratory or research materials, fieldwork costs and conference travel<sup>1</sup> although these activities are required for many students. Gates Cambridge also says that it does not cover bench fees, the costs of scientific equipment or similar academic resources; nor does it cover additional fees charged by departments for fieldwork, orientation activities, mandatory study trips, courses outside Cambridge or similar<sup>2</sup>. As a result, the occurrence of such fees can be quite detrimental to the student with minimal funding at his/her disposal.

While in Table 1, we looked at the distribution of rooms and their rents in colleges in Cambridge, it is interesting to note other kinds of accommodation available to students. Most of these accommodations were found to be in a 3 mile radius of the Great St. Mary's Church, in places such as Mill Road, Cherry Hinton and Chesterton. Most of such homes are furnished and have upfront rental fees (that may be abolished soon). To make things better, council tax is not payable by students and bills (that are often included in the rent) are approximately £100 per month for an average user.

As you can see, the private options can be way cheaper than college accommodation in Cambridge. However, due to a number of reasons incoming graduate students rely more on the latter than the former [7]. For one, offers are often received late in the year and so the easiest option offered is the most attractive for the students. Student may also not be able to afford hotel accommodation for the time it might take to find a home. International students may not have the cultural understanding of renting in the UK to be able to make safe decisions about where

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.graduate.study.cam.ac.uk/finance/maintenance>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gatescambridge.org/apply/value>

to live and hear horror stories of student exploitation. Also, upfront rental fees and costs to establish a home are not covered by funding bodies though they may save money in the long run. Not to forget, landlords are often unwilling to rent to students, and especially to those without a rental history in the UK.

The onus therefore comes back to the University, not only to talk to Colleges to reduce rent but also to build more purpose-built student accommodations, possibly with the involvement of the City Council. I hope this paper highlights certain key nuances and problems related to postgraduate student housing in Cambridge, and can be a central resource-document to charting our path when standing up for housing, fair rent and no hidden charges in the Collegiate University.

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[1] National *Union of Students (NUS) and Unipol. Accommodation Costs Survey 2018. Report (2018).*

[2] Helen Crane. *Best in class: Student Accommodation Awards.* Property Week. News Report, 17 January 2019.

[3] Education Quality and Policy Office, University of Cambridge. *Student Barometer Survey.* Report (2018).

[4] Cambridge University Student Union. *Big Cambridge Survey 2018.* Report (2018).

[5] Graduate Admissions, University of Cambridge. *Key Facts and Figures.* Data (2018)

[6] Cambridge Centre for Housing & Planning Research. *Assessment of Student Housing Demand and Supply for Cambridge City Council.* Report to Cambridge City Council (January 2017)

[7] Byrne, Tamzin. *Rents at Murray Edwards: MCR perspective.* January 2019

**Table 1: College-wise Room Distribution and Rent in the University, prepared by Mrittunjoy (GU VP'18-19) [5]**

College	Single Rooms & AMR <sup>1</sup>			Flats for Single Occupancy & AMR <sup>1</sup>			Flats for Couples & AMR <sup>1</sup>			Percentage of PG students living in college accommodation
	Ens. <sup>2</sup>	GL <sup>3</sup>	Total No. Rooms <i>Rent Range</i>	Ens. <sup>2</sup>	GL <sup>3</sup>	Total No. Rooms <i>Rent Range</i>	Ens. <sup>2</sup>	GL <sup>3</sup>	Total No. Rooms <i>Rent Range</i>	
Christ's	90		90 <i>£490 - £650</i>	11		11 <i>£705</i>	6		6 <i>£820</i>	45%
Churchill	32	47	167 <i>£403 - £724</i>	40 ensuite flats, with 20 on ground-floor <i>£843 - £1069</i>						70%
Clare	31	26	95 <i>£482 - £708</i>	9	8	9 <i>£691 - £707</i>	7	0	7 <i>£1017 - £1029</i>	55%
Clare Hall	70		70 <i>£436 - £544</i>	Clare Hall has 9 double rooms with price range of <i>£136 - £173</i> per week and 22 ensuite rooms with a price of about <i>£146</i> per week						62%
Corpus Christi	88		88 <i>£400 - £572</i>	Corpus Christi has 46 ensuite single-rooms with price range of <i>£134 - £169</i> per week and 8 flats with price range of <i>£221 - £250</i> per week						70%
Darwin	39	70	283 <i>£96.24 - £161.66</i> <i>pw<sup>4</sup></i>	14	6	14 ( <i>One Bedroom</i> ) <i>£182-£223 pw<sup>4</sup></i>	9	1	9 ( <i>Two Bedroom</i> ) <i>£207-£334 pw<sup>4</sup></i>	50%
Downing	87	18	111 <i>£137 - £202 pw<sup>4</sup></i>	Downing has 10 flats/family-houses with 7 on the ground floor, with a price-range of <i>£172 - £275</i> (dependent on occupancy) <i>pw<sup>4</sup></i>						NA
Emmanuel	116		116 <i>£135.2 pw<sup>4</sup></i>	-						66%
Fitzwilliam	Fitzwilliam has 117 single-rooms, some with wash-basin or shower at <i>£113 - £149 pw<sup>4</sup></i> and 66 ensuite single rooms at <i>£140 - £161 pw<sup>4</sup></i>			Fitzwilliam has 12 doubles/couples flats with a price-range of <i>£161 - £223 pw<sup>4</sup></i> and 2 family flats with a price-range of <i>£257 pw<sup>4</sup></i>						75%
Girton	235	NA	235	Girton has 3 x 2 and 1 x 1 bed flats with a price-range of <i>£850 - £950</i>						100%

			<i>£167.25 pw<sup>4</sup></i>		
Gonville and Caius	Gonville and Caius has 139 single-rooms, 126 doubles-room and 13 families rooms				80%
Homerton	168		168 <i>£134.40 pw<sup>4</sup></i>	Homerton has 6 doubles rooms with a price-range of <i>£184.80 pw<sup>4</sup></i>	56%
Hughes Hall	396		396 <i>£107 - £179 pw<sup>4</sup></i>	Hughes Hall has 12 doubles-rooms with a price-range of <i>£215 - £287 pw<sup>4</sup></i> and 226 ensuite rooms	65%
Jesus	26	65	211-229 <i>£445 - £810</i>	Jesus has 22-28 couples/family rooms, all of which are ensuite and 5 of which are on the ground-floor, with a price-range of <i>£810-£1070</i>	55%
Kings	126		126 <i>£105-£166 pw<sup>4</sup></i>	Kings has 7 families rooms with a price-range of around <i>£275 pw<sup>4</sup></i> and 14 ensuite rooms	50%
Lucy Cavendish	105	29	194 <i>£150 pw<sup>4</sup></i> (ensuite)	Lucy Cavendish has 4-5 doubles rooms (with one-bedroom) with a price-range of <i>£255 pw<sup>4</sup></i> and 4 flats/family-houses (with two-bedrooms) with a price-range of <i>£270 pw<sup>4</sup></i> . It also has 3 senior member flats.	75%
Magdalene	Magdalene has seven bands for single rooms with prices ranging from <i>£105.14 - £156.80 pw<sup>4</sup></i> and three bands for flats with prices ranging from <i>£223.86 - £258.16 pw<sup>4</sup></i>				50%
Murray Edwards	48	11	57-59 <i>£400-£520</i>	-	28%
Newnham	0	31	119 <i>£118 - £144 pw<sup>4</sup></i>	Newnham has 9 ensuite, ground-floor family/flat rooms with a price-range of <i>£320 pw<sup>4</sup></i>	NA
Pembroke	121		121 <i>£86 - £145 pw<sup>4</sup></i>	Pembroke has 5 doubles rooms ( <i>£215 pw<sup>4</sup></i> ), 1 Families room ( <i>£106 pw<sup>4</sup></i> ) and 29 ensuite rooms	72%
Peterhouse	Peterhouse has bed-sitting rooms in the price-range of <i>£250 - £550</i> and self-contained flats in the range of <i>£500 - £1050</i>				75%
Queen's	11	50	172-180 <i>£394 - £526</i>	Queen's has 13 flats/family-rooms with a price-range of <i>£818 - £994</i>	58%
Robinson	31		31 <i>£110 - £165 pw<sup>4</sup></i>	Robinson has 2 doubles and 47 ensuite rooms	72%
Selwyn	51	15	111 <i>£90.16 - £164.69</i>	Selwyn has 10 flats (couples only) with a price-range of <i>£980.00 - £1322.00</i>	49%

			$pw^4$		
Sidney Sussex	4	0	104 <i>£440 - £490</i>	Sidney Sussex has 6 ensuite doubles rooms in the price range of <i>£660 - £820</i>	33%
St. Catharine's	82	36	110 <i>£430 - £485</i>	St. Catharine's has 5 ensuite flat/family-rooms (one on the ground floor) with price-range of <i>£650 - £800</i>	50%
St. Edmund's	140		140 <i>£455-£610</i>	St. Edmund's has 12 doubles/family with price-range of <i>£677-£1494</i> and 125 ensuite rooms with price of around <i>£685</i>	65%
St. John's	3	0	230 <i>£460 - £720</i>	St. John's has 50 ensuite flats/family-rooms with price-range of <i>£703.72 - £1,032.04</i>	85%
Trinity	175		175 <i>£94 - £130 <math>pw^4</math></i>	Trinity has 8 doubles-rooms with a price of around <i>£156 <math>pw^4</math></i> , 14 families-rooms with a price of around <i>£121 <math>pw^4</math></i> and 99 ensuite rooms	82%
Trinity Hall	64 Single Non-ensuite and 46 Single Ensuite		64 Single Non-ensuite ( <i>£100-£170 <math>pw^4</math></i> ) and 46 Single Ensuite ( <i>£150-£155 <math>pw^4</math></i> )	Trinity Hall has 12 flats with a price-range of <i>£215-£220 <math>pw^4</math></i>	59%
Wolfson	390 (65% ensuite)		390 (65% ensuite) <i>£104 - £166 <math>pw^4</math></i>	Wolfson has 19 doubles-rooms with a price-range of <i>£187 - £268</i> and 5 family-rooms with a price of around <i>£288</i>	66%

<sup>1</sup>AMR – Approximate Monthly Rent 2018-2019, except where mentioned otherwise

<sup>2</sup>Ens. – Ensuite

<sup>3</sup>GL – Ground level

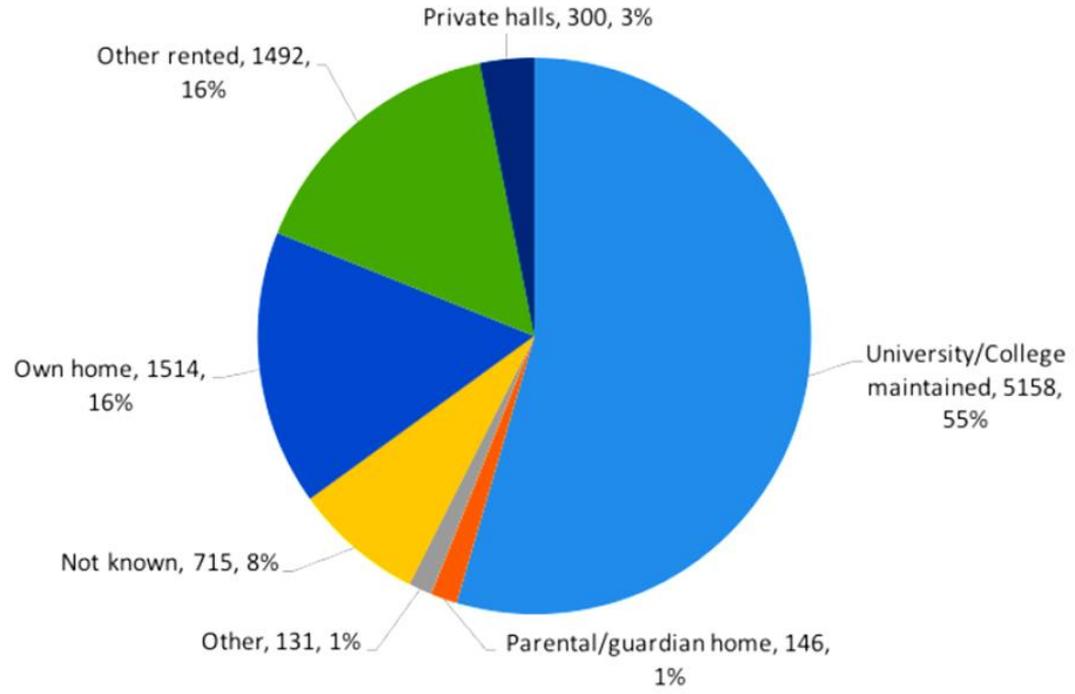
<sup>4</sup>pw – per week

**Table 2:** Room Distribution for postgraduate students in the University 2015/16 [6]

	Self-contained Studio Flats	En-suite Bedrooms	Bedrooms with Shared Facilities
Postgraduate Taught or Research Courses	418 (6%)	4044 (56%)	2718 (38%)
Units not Separated by Degree Type ( <i>Wolfson College</i> )	27 (7%)	8088 (47%)	83 (20%)

*Table 3: Number of students and accommodation in Cambridge 2015/16 [6]*

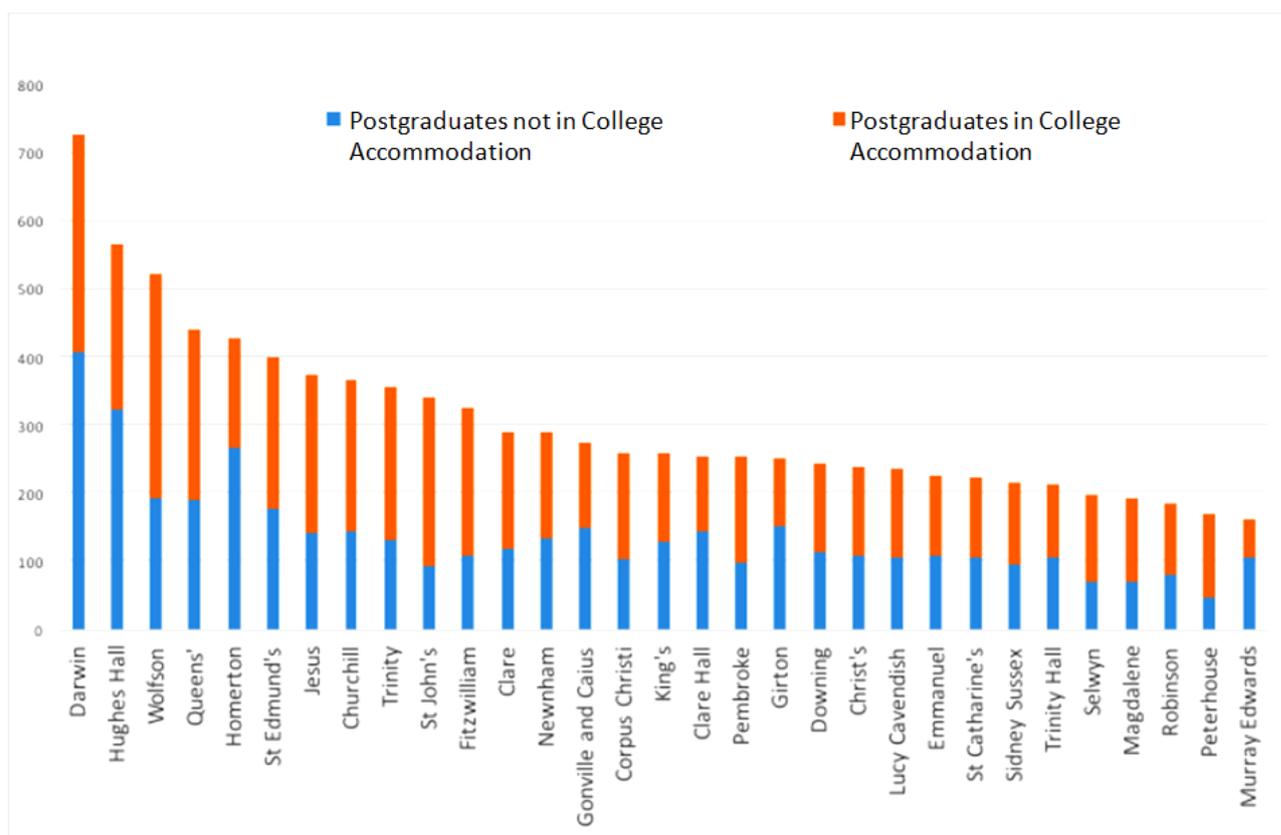
	Purpose-built Accommodation		Shared existing Housing		Existing family housing (parental/guardian home)	No information		Total
	University/College-maintained	Private Halls	Other rented	Own home		Other	Not known	
Postgraduate (1 Year)	2240	59	212	220	68	26	277	3102
Postgraduate (2+ Years)	2890	241	1278	1293	78	105	425	6310



*Figure 1: Distribution of postgraduate accommodation 2015/16 [6]*

*Table 4: Intended Rate of Expansion of College Accommodation over next 5-10 Years*

College	Intended Rate of Expansion of Postgraduate Accommodation
Christ's	-
Churchill	2%
Clare	2%
Clare Hall	0%
Corpus Christi	2%
Darwin	1%
Downing	2%
Emmanuel	0%
Fitzwilliam	0%
Girton	7%
Gonville and Caius	2%
Homerton	0%
Hughes Hall	2%
Jesus	-
King's	0%
Lucy Cavendish	10%
Magdalene	-
Murray Edwards	20%
Newnham	2%
Pembroke	2%
Peterhouse	2%
Queens'	1%
Selwyn	2%
Sidney Sussex	2%
St. Catharine's	1%
St. Edmund's	2%
St. John's	2%
Wolfson	'Slight'



**Figure 2:** College-wise Distribution of Postgraduates availing or not availing College Accommodation 2015/16 [6]

**Table 5:** Major funding options for postgraduate students in the University of Cambridge

Funding	Monthly Stipend (2018/19)	Comments
Gates Cambridge Trust	Around £1458	Gates Cambridge scholarship does not cover bench fees, the costs of scientific equipment or similar academic resources; nor does it cover additional fees charged by departments for fieldwork, orientation activities, mandatory study

		trips, courses outside Cambridge or similar.
Most Cambridge Trust Scholarships	£1000 - £1200	The University usually mentions the absolute minimum as the financial requirement and based on that, the annual stipends are categorised, usually as 'sufficient for one person'
AHRC/BBSRC/MRC/NERC/STFC/ESRC/EPSRC DTP Studentships	Around £1231	Specialized DTP Programmes given by various Research Councils in the United Kingdom, in various departments of the University of Cambridge
Commonwealth Scholarship	£1084	These amounts are set by the UK government for all students on government-funded scholarships, and increase annually.
Chevening Scholarship	£1058	This information is available in the <a href="#">Transparency Data</a> from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office

**Table 6: Other Forms of Accommodation [7]**

Type of accommodation	Rent per month	Rent + utilities	Total per quart
Lodging with landlady / family	£450 - £550	£550 - £650	£1650 - £1950
Shared accommodation with friends – one room in large house	£400 - £750	£500 - £850	£1500 - £2550
Half the cost of a small 2-bed apartment (eg students w partners)	£450 - £700	£550 - £800	£1650 - £2400
Eddington – discount rate for low-wage earners (1/3 of funding)	£392	£500	£1500
Eddington – maximum rate for room in a shared home	£675	£775	£2325

## 4 b) College's Equality Champions Policy

**Proposer:** Alessandro Ceccarelli, LGBTQ+ Officer, Graduate Union

**Seconded:** Mriritunjoy Guha Majumdar, Vice-President, Graduate Union

**Motion:** To elect three Champions of Equality within each College

GU Council notes:

1. That in the 2019 Magdalene College MCR was dismantled, and issues of representations for minorities were addressed by the student community.
2. That in 2018/19 Colleges and their Governing Bodies have been associated with possible validation of academics and research accused of racist stereotyping (e.g. St. Edmunds; see Adams 2018).
3. That the issue of representation of minorities in Cambridge was highly debated by the Medias (see Quinn 2018).
4. That some students have raised the issues of inclusivity and representation at both MCRs (grad) and SCR (post-grad and fellows) levels.

GU Council believes:

1. That colleges should encourage minority representation, starting from the SCR, post-grad, and fellows' level, so to have a stronger impact on the broader community, policy framework and resolutions.

GU Council resolves:

4. To request all Colleges to elect three (3) Equality Champions at the level of SCR/ Governing Body: a BAME Champion; a LGBTQ+ Champion; and a Women Champion.
5. These Champions will serve as role models in the college. No pressure will be put on them to solve issues of sexism, racism, homophobia or transphobia.
6. That these Champions will be publicly presented by the college at the beginning of each academic year, and their details will be available on College's websites.
7. To follow similar line of action of the already existing University's Equality Champions who operate at Schools and Faculties levels.
8. That this three College's Champions will play a key role in sustaining academic excellence, representation and inclusivity.

**Bibliography**

Ben Quinn 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2018/jun/03/cambridge-colleges-poor-record-on-diversity-highlighted-by-report>

Richard Adams 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/dec/07/cambridge-gives-role-to-academic-accused-of-racist-stereotyping>

## Suggestions for the College and MCR Committee

### 1. For Colleges:

- Organise mandatory educational events during fresher and/or “re-fresher” weeks (Lent Term) that can address gender, sexuality and ethnicity issues, in relation to an effort of building an inclusive community.
- Provide mandatory training for the MCR committee. Trainings are usually offered by the Graduate Union for free.
- A strategy should be developed to fit to the current “traditional culture”. The old traditions can be sustained and maintained, yet innovations could also contribute to keep the traditions alive. Work on creating safe spaces and give visibility to women, LGBTQ+ and BME+ people, especially Black South African minorities in the College (given the history of our college).
- Dropping some ideas: Many Faculties are promotive the figures of “Champions” of rights; e.g. LGBTQ+ Champion, etc. What about dedicated sections in the library?
- Can we improve the diversity at the college? What strategies are in place? Some articles seem to point out that Magdalene is one of the least diverse colleges in Oxbridge.
- Create a diversity mission: clear statements, public statements?
- What do you think about a fully payed counsellor, or a free counsellor from the Graduate Union? What is the type of Welfare support currently available within the college? Is it good for BME and LGBTQ+ minorities? Would the community welcome a college counsellor, if she was a layperson, immigrant, black lesbian woman?

### 2. For MCR Committees

- Question the structure and functions of MCR as it is now. Purposes and commitments? Is it really just about free food, free drinks and movie nights?
- Question the presence of certain people in the committee, and to what extent they reflect the community and/or have a positive/negative impact on the community.
- Update the constitution to clearly mention “pro-active” and “re-active” roles, to promote events, to engage and support the community, and to question the College if certain policies do not represent the community.
- Better define the roles and responsibilities of each portfolio.
- Do not organise “grilling sessions”. In the past, the MCR committee has invited a “guest” to their meetings, to ask for advice or to question the individual. The guest finds himself/herself/themselves in a quite uncomfortable situation: alone, in front of the whole committee, often in an aggressive environment. This is a toxic scenario. Instead, try to engage the community in a more friendly way, organising group meetings and one-to-one sessions.

The MCR committee should be the one to engage the committee, and “move” out of their comfort zone, and meet the “guest” in a safe environment for the guest.

- Cancel the role of Admiral of the Punt, which does not have any use for the community, and can be better allocated to represent the community.
- Elect a LGBTQ+ officer and BME officer, to actively engage the community, participate to meetings, promote events, and react to episode of homophobia, transphobia and racism.
- Zero tolerance towards episodes of racisms, misogyny or attack to the LGBTQ+ community. Clearly state it in the MCR manifesto. Things like “Why do we need minorities officers?”; or “We do not need minorities reps!”; or “Nobody cares about events for minorities!”, can be directly translated as disrespectful attacks to a portion of the population, and are synonyms of racist, misogynous and homophobic behaviours.
- Include a Woman portfolio, to engage in woman rights and visibility within the community.
- Set up a procedure in case members of the MCR committee do not fulfil their roles or are associated with episodes of racisms, misogyny or attack to the LGBTQ+ community.
- Update the website, so that pages and information regarding welfare, BME, LGBTQ+ and support for women victims of harassment are easily accessible.
- Set up an online anonymous poll or form. The community will be able to communicate to the MCR committee via that channel as well. The MCR should promote such platforms, welcome criticism and should not take it personally if mistakes or updates are suggested.
- Generate a culture of inclusivity and representation. Ask yourself, “why do we only get always the same 15 people coming to the events?”
- Assess priorities: what roles should be given higher visibility or responsibility? MPhil rep, PhD rep, Admiral of the Punt; or LGBTQ+, BME, Welfare and Women officers?
- Welfare should be one of the highest roles in the MCR committee, right after the President.
- Subscribe to the Graduate Union membership (free) and attend the GU council meetings. They offer free training and resources for MCRs.
- The Welfare officer should be actively involved in executive committee meeting.
- The executive committee should be responsible for the effectiveness of Women, LGBTQ+ and BME+ officers.
- Nobody is forcing anyone to be a volunteer representative of the community. Not everyone is capable of sustaining that role.
- Meetings should be always minuted and published, and also reported to the GB. Especially if complains are presented to the MCR committee. Things like, “I have never heard these complains before!” should not happen.

This is what I suggest, and in large part this is what I have been suggesting since September 2018, for long term positive changes.

## 4 c) Rethinking Funding from the Student Support Initiative

**Proposer:** Tamzin Byrne (President, Murray Edwards College)

**Seconded:** Mrittunjoy Guha Majumdar (Vice-President, Graduate Union)

The GU notes

1. That the University in 2018 launched the Student Support Initiative, a £500 million fundraising initiative focused on student welfare including funding for graduate studentships to support “less well-off students”. [1]
2. That the University recently announced that the first 20% of this goal had been achieved with a single private donation from the Harding family of £100 million, saying that this would “help attract the most talented... students”. [2]
3. That the University is circulating a draft 2018-2023 education strategy proposing a dramatic increase in the number of graduate students, and sets aggressive targets for growth of professional, part time, remote postgraduate degrees which are seen by many in the University as a source of revenue.
4. That this strategy also calls for student welfare support to be properly costed and funded in support of increasing student numbers but as yet does not have any detail about how this can be achieved.
5. That many students remain unaware of this strategy and have had little opportunity to input into this process.

The GU believes

1. That existing levels of funding for graduate students are inadequate, leaving students in severe housing stress, with median college rents costing approximately 60% of a standard Cambridge Trust studentship and with hidden fees such as bench fees and fieldwork costs not covered by many funding schemes.
2. That the SSI and associated studentships are sorely needed to support students at existing admissions levels, and that the proposed studentships cannot be used to drive growth in student numbers.
3. That the infrastructure for graduates is already under strain, in terms of college places, supervisors, accommodation, welfare and funding.
4. That the quality of education and student experience cannot be maintained if graduate student numbers increase on this scale.
5. That student welfare initiatives run by the Union and the University cannot be maintained if graduate student numbers increase on this scale particularly if students are remote from the University.
6. That the education strategy provides insufficient detail as to how the SSI can be spent to address this unmet need.

The GU resolves:

1. To request the University to urgently circulate the draft education strategy to GU Council members via the GU executive.
2. To demand that the University publicly re-commit that the SSI money, including the Harding donation, will be dedicated to needs-based funding for any graduate student who has made their offer, not competitive merit-based funding as per the Gates Cambridge programme..
3. To lobby the University, the Cambridge Trust and other major providers of graduate funding to increase the amount given to students.
4. To demand that the University freeze graduate student numbers until college, welfare and funding infrastructure for graduates is improved.
5. To lobby for greater emphasis put within the wellbeing and mental health strategy to cater to various cross-sections of student interests, particularly in the areas of housing, disability and childcare.

### References:

[1] <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2018/oct/01/cambridge-university-transition-programme-disadvantaged-students>

[2] <https://www.cam.ac.uk/news/cambridge-university-secures-unprecedented-ps100-million-gift-to-support-students>

## 4 d) Fair Conditions for Teaching Opportunities

**Proposer:** Mrittunjoy Guha Majumdar, Vice-President, Graduate Union

**Seconded:** Sofia Ropek-Hewson, President, Graduate Union

The Graduate Union Notes:

1. The Cambridge branch of the University and College Union (UCU) recently released a report criticising the increased casualisation of employment at the University. The report highlights two key issues: the lack of fair-pay in hourly-paid teaching and the insecurity of those employed through the Temporary Employment Service (TES), which has employed 2573 staff in the last three years. While TES workers are usually temporary workers, their work does not reflect the temporariness of the employment, with even cases of nine-ten months' employment reported.
2. Added to this are lower levels of legal rights and protection, a lack of opportunity for career progression and an adverse impact on mental health and the quality of life.
3. The current pay-structure disregards the time spent in preparing for the task at hand or aspects such as correction of student reports.
4. In 2018, 56% of staff performing assessment and examination work and 39% of supervisors highlighted that their effective hourly rate after taking into account preparation time, was less than the 2017/2018 Real Living Wage of £8.45.
5. As per the 2016 UCU Survey and the 2018 THE Survey, 38% academics work over five hours at the weekend. According to these surveys, staff who are on 0.3 Full Time Employment (FTE) and under contracts work 190% of contracted hours. College supervision rates have also fallen behind inflation, with the average pay for university staff dropping in real terms by 11.8% (CPI) and 17.8% (RPI) since 2009.
6. The important point of interest was that in real terms, the 2% pay 'increase' was just another pay cut and that since 2009, wages for staff at the University of Cambridge had risen by only 9.5%, while
  - a. Cumulative inflation in the Consumer Price Index had been 24.6%
  - b. Average house prices in Cambridge had risen by nearly 90%
  - c. University of Cambridge workplace nursery fees had risen by 35%
  - d. Pension provision had been eroded in most HE schemes
7. Given the importance of a good teaching staff and environment in the university, we must stand up and side strongly with our teachers and staff. Many of our GU members themselves are involved in teaching in the university.
8. Recently the UCU ballot for industrial action, which ended on 22 February, fell through and our previous motion on this topic therefore has to be followed up with more definite suggestions on this front.

The Graduate Union Believes:

1. All postgraduate and mature undergraduate students who are employed in teaching roles must be properly trained, supported and paid.
2. Good teaching, which relies on good working conditions for staff, leads to the overall improvement in the quality of education.
3. Teaching opportunities are important for the career progression of early academics but these must not be offered with poor working conditions.
4. Any member of the Graduate Union must always be remunerated for their work as teachers during their doctoral or master's programme.
5. Students involved in teaching are collaborators in the production of knowledge and must be treated as such, on an equal basis as academic colleagues and be treated as professionals in their subjects.

The Graduate Union Resolves:

To support the following principles with regards to teaching activities and actively work towards upholding them

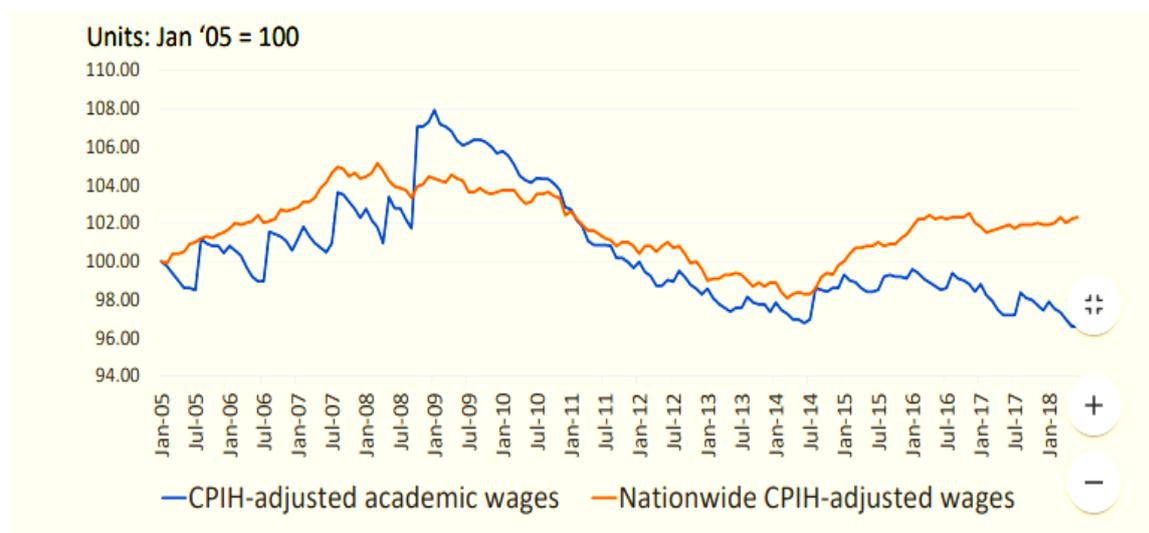
- a. *Fairness and transparency in appointments*: All postgraduate research students should have equal access and opportunity to apply and be selected for teaching opportunities, as and when they arise. This should be through a formal, transparent and reliable process. All positions should be advertised properly so that any qualified student may apply for them. The remit of the role, amount and regularity of the remuneration, provisions for sickness and leave must all be clearly specified in the statement or contract drawn when availing such opportunities.
- b. *Fairness in rate of pay*: All postgraduate and mature undergraduate students, in the Collegiate University, who have teaching responsibilities, should be remunerated. This should include recognizing the time spent for preparation, marking, administrative work associated with their teaching.
- c. *Welfare and System(s) of Support for students who teach*: There should be a system in place for mentoring and supervision of student-teachers, with a regular feedback on progress. This should be by academics who are *not* the student's research supervisor. Student-teachers should also be able to raise points of concern and seek advice from a dedicated member of staff, who can also provide reference for the student's later career.
- d. *Dialogue with University and Colleges*: To engage and talk to the Collegiate University, particularly departments, to lobby for the interests of students who teach.
- e. *Independent feedback system*: To have an independent GU-based feedback system that shall accept information from students regarding concerns and issues with respect to them teaching and teaching opportunities.

## Background Paper

Mrittunjoy

Good teachers (and staff) are crucial for a good education of students. They are essential cogs in the wheel of higher education today, diversified and demanding as it is, and therefore their satisfaction with pay and benefits is important for the advancement of the education of students. In the UK, the student population almost doubled, growing from 984,000 to 1.87 million, between 1992 and 2016 [1]. To tackle these burgeoning numbers, higher education has become a large employer in the United Kingdom, with British universities employing 131,136 people in 1999, which rose to 270,000 in 2016. As per Higher Education Statistics Agency, there were 284,060 staff-members in 2016/17 employed on full-time contracts, while there were 135,650 in part-time contracts in 2016/17 [2].

The Cambridge branch of the University and College Union (UCU) recently released a report<sup>3</sup> criticising the increased casualisation of employment at the University [3]. The report highlights two key issues: the lack of fair-pay in hourly-paid teaching and the insecurity of those employed through the Temporary Employment Service (TES), which has employed 2573 staff in the last three years. While TES workers are usually temporary workers, their work does not reflect the temporariness of the employment, with even cases of nine-ten months' employment reported. Added to this are lower levels of legal rights and protection, a lack of opportunity for career progression and an adverse impact on mental health and the quality of life. Interestingly 65% of TES workers are women and 15% are BME, making it also a cause of concern, with regard to the attainment of equality [4].



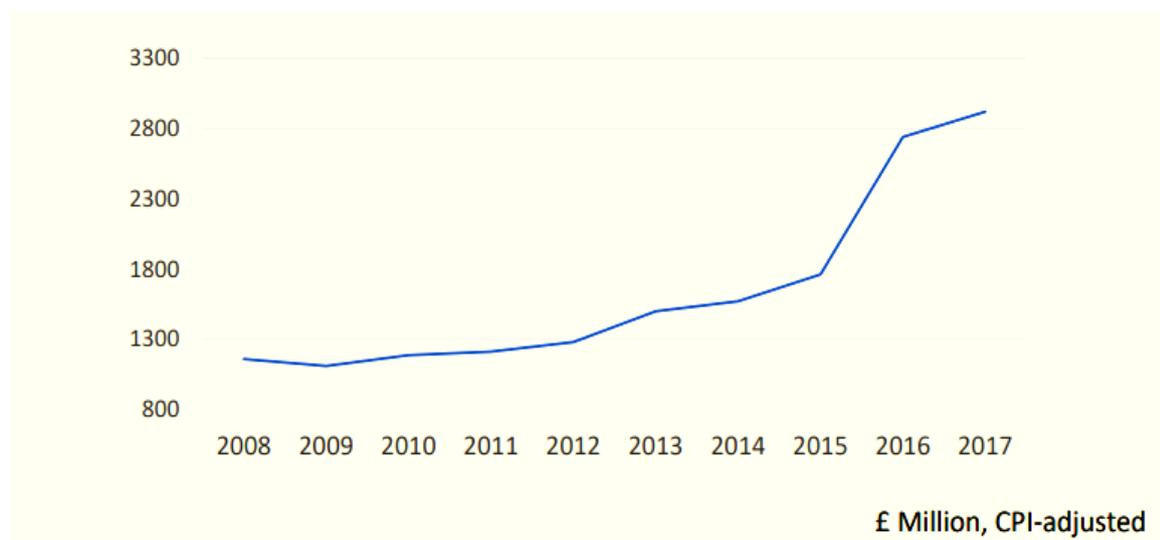
HE Wages.

<sup>3</sup> This report is the product of three surveys carried out by Cambridge UCU: a 2018 survey of 108 Temporary Employment Service workers, a 2018 survey of 140 hourly-paid staff and a 2017 survey of 513 grad students. It also makes use of information obtained through Freedom of Information requests, and was produced with support from two other Cambridge University trade union branches: Unite and Unison.

Source: Office for National Statistics

Hourly paid teaching is ubiquitous across the various departments and Faculties of the University. This includes supervisions, lectures and laboratory demonstrations, some of which are undertaken by members of the Graduate Union. The current pay-structure disregards the time spent in preparing for the task at hand or aspects such as correction of student reports. In the 2017 UCU survey of graduate students, supervisors for the Department of Politics and International Studies (POLIS), Architecture, Classics and Music required an average of 4-5 hours of preparation for each hour of supervision, whilst Psychology, Education and Engineering required an average of 2 hours. In 2018, 56% of staff performing assessment and examination work and 39% of supervisors highlighted that their effective hourly rate after taking into account preparation time, was less than the 2017/2018 Real Living Wage<sup>4</sup> of £8.45. As per the 2016 UCU Survey and the 2018 THE Survey, 38% academics work over five hours at the weekend [5, 6]. According to these surveys, staff who are on 0.3 Full Time Employment (FTE) and under contracts work 190% of contracted hours. College supervision rates have also fallen behind inflation, with the average pay for university staff dropping in real terms by 11.8% (CPI) and 17.8% (RPI) since 2009.

It is interesting to note that Cambridge University has had soaring capital expenditure in projects such as the North-West Cambridge Development project [7]. Currently it has about £1 billion in bond debts, part of which it seeks to pay off with the North-West 'Affordable' housing solution that has no long-term cap on rent, as it stands. The university has been providing Market-Pay Supplements (MPSs) but to a very few people: only 180 men and 70 women in 2017. There seems to be an over-reliance on this kind of pay due to depreciation in real wages. As per the UCAM Gender Pay Reports, there was a 20% gender pay gap at Cambridge [8].



*Financial Reserves.*

<sup>4</sup> The Real Living Wage, calculated by the Living Wage Foundation, is higher than the National Living Wage, which is calculated by the UK government.

**Source:** UCAM Annual Financial Reports (The Reporter)

The response by the University has been encouraging but still needs to be backed up by clearer positions and associated actions. In their letter to Professor Stephen Toope, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, the University and College Union (UCU) and Unison Union highlighted that in his email to staff on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2018, Professor Toope acknowledged the concerns of Cambridge University staff over the deterioration of their pay, noting that he have agreed to implement the 2% increase in salaries proposed by Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA), but also stated that he recommended and continued to support a higher increase in basic pay than the 2% currently on the table [9]. The Unions felt that this needed to be backed up by better implementation. The important point of interest was that in real terms, the 2% pay 'increase' was just another pay cut and that since 2009, wages for staff at the University of Cambridge had risen by only 9.5%, while

1. Cumulative inflation in the Consumer Price Index had been 24.6%
2. Average house prices in Cambridge had risen by nearly 90%
3. University of Cambridge workplace nursery fees had risen by 35%
4. Pension provision had been eroded in most HE schemes

Across the Higher Education sector nationally, the Unions noted that the real-terms pay (by CPI) has dropped more than 12% since 2009. To recover some of this, in this pay round the Higher Education (HE) trade unions called for an increase for all staff of 7.5%, and at least £1500. They also called for action to address the spread of precarious contracts and pay inequalities. However the ballot for industrial action by UCU narrowly fell through last year. On the national scale, the Joint Expert Panel (JEP) was set up by the University and College Union (UCU) and Universities UK (UUK) following industrial dispute over the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS), which is a pension scheme in the United Kingdom with over £50 billion under management. In their report, the JEP gave four definite areas where change was needed [10]:

1. A re-evaluation of the employers' attitude to risk.
2. Adopting a greater consistency of approach between valuations across years for the pension scheme.
3. Ensuring fairness and equality between generations of scheme members by smoothing future service contributions.
4. Ensuring the valuation uses the most recently available information and factors such as market improvements and new investment considerations.

Universities UK (UUK) came out firmly against the increased Deficit Recovery Contributions (DRCs), which came at a cost of cost of 3.9% of total salaries, that the USS Trustee demanded recently, after their November valuation. All of these contributions have been supported by cuts in salaries and benefits of staff.

## References:

- [1] Office for National Statistics, “*How Has the Student Population Changed,*” 20 September 2016.
- [2] Higher Education Statistics Agency. *Higher Education Staff Statistics: UK, 2016/17*.
- [3] University and College Union. ‘*Stamp out Casualisation in Cambridge*’. Report, 2018.
- [4] Kiran Khanom. ‘*Cambridge UCU calls for end to Cambridge’s ‘gig economy’ contracts and unfair pay*’. Varsity (News Report), 2018.
- [5] University and College Union. ‘*UCU Workload Survey 2016*’. Survey, 2016.
- [6] The Times Higher Education. ‘*THE Student Experience Survey 2018*’. Survey, 2018.
- [7] University and College Union (Cambridge). ‘*Pay and Equality Meeting*’. Presentation, 2018.
- [8] University of Cambridge. ‘*Gender Pay Gap Report 2017*’. Report, 2017.
- [9] University and College Union (UCU) and Unison Union. ‘*Joint UCU and UNISON letter to the VC on Pay and Equality*’. Letter, 2018.
- [10] Joint Expert Panel. ‘*Joint Expert Panel Report*’. Report, 2018.

## 5. Lent Term Elections

**Schedule E** of the by-laws states that the President, as well as the Welfare and Rights Officer shall usually be delegated to the CUSU elections committee. Council may also delegate other elections to the CUSU elections committee, provided that the GU President (or other person acting as Returning Officer) have some form of vote on the committee. Council is asked to delegate the running of the election to the Cambridge University Students' Union Election Committee, and asks the President, acting as Returning Officer is a member.

### Dates for the Election

Wednesday 20 <sup>th</sup> February	9:00	Nominations Open
Tuesday 26 <sup>th</sup> February	12:00	Nominations Close
	18:00	Candidates Briefing (location tbc)
Thursday 28 <sup>th</sup> February	9:00	Campaigning Opens
Friday 1 <sup>st</sup> March	18:00	Hustings (location tbc)
Monday 4 <sup>th</sup> March	9:00	Colleges are sent materials
Tuesday 5 <sup>th</sup> March	9:00	Voting Opens
Friday 8 <sup>th</sup> March	17:00	Voting Closes
	19:00	Provisional Results Announced
Monday 11 <sup>th</sup> March	10:00	Official Results Announced

Graduate Union positions during this election will be:

1. President (start date of 1<sup>st</sup> July)
2. Welfare and Rights Officer (start date of 1<sup>st</sup> July)
3. Disabled Students Officer (from Easter Term)
4. Faculty Liaison Officer (from Easter Term)
5. Open Portfolio Officer (from Easter Term)

The elections were successfully conducted and ended at 5:00 PM on 8 March 2019. Alessandro Ceccarelli was elected as the next President of the Graduate Union.

### Student Trustee

Further to the above, the executive committee will open nominations for student trustees at the March meeting (11<sup>th</sup>) for co-option at the April meeting 30<sup>th</sup> April. The Executive committee currently suggests 2 students to fill the student trustee position, for 1 year from the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2019 to 1<sup>st</sup> October 2020.