



Graduate Union Minutes of a Meeting of the Student Council

Held at 2pm on 30 January 2016, in the CUSU/GU Lounge at 17 Mill Lane

Voting members of Council present:

Representing the Affiliated Common Rooms:

- Carla Pastorino Campos (Clare Hall GSB)
- Rachel Evans (Emmanuel MCR)
- Andrew Tanabe (Fitzwilliam MCR)
- Chris Hellmund (Jesus MCR)
- Rebecca Love (KCGS)
- Alice levins (Pembroke GP)
- Mark Driver (Robinson MCR)
- Nate Davis (St John's SBR)
- Krishna Sharma (Trinity BA Society)
- Dan Bowen (Trinity Hall MCR)
- Usman Javed (WCSA)

Representing the Faculties:

- Daniel Baumann (Computer Laboratory)

Voting members of Council present by proxy:

Representing the Affiliated Common Rooms:

- Olivia Elder (Peterhouse MCR)

Representing the Faculties:

- Grace Catherine Greiner (English)
- Akemi Herraiez-Vossbrink (Architecture and History of Art)
- Pui Ip (Divinity)
- Massimo Lando (Law)
- Rebecca Lees (Classics)

Non-voting members of Council present:

- The President
- The Families Officer

Other GU Members in attendance:

- Anna Fee
- Haydn King
- Maxine Lamb
- Philip Luther-Davies
- C.J. Rauch
- Erwan Rolland

Also in attendance:

- Rob Richardson (GU Manager – acting as Secretary)

The Council appointed the President to Chair the meeting.

The Council confirmed that the proxies of voting members of the Council count towards quorum.

There were 18 voting members of Council (or their proxies) present, and so a quorum was achieved.

1. Approval of the minutes of the previous Council meeting

The minutes of the Council held on 12 October 2015 were approved, with no amendments.

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

There were none.

3. Reports to Council from Sabbatical Officers and Officers of the Executive Committee**(a) Graduate Representation Review**

The President delivered to the Council the presentation which had previously been given to the graduate representation review committee. The University Council had established the review committee to decide on the most effective method of graduate representation at the university.

The Council commented that the presentation provided a good overview of the GU's purpose and functions.

The President agreed to circulate the slides.

(b) Returning Officer's report on the GU Presidential By-Election 2015

The report was presented and approved.

(c) Electoral scheme 2015-16

The scheme and the electoral dates contained within were presented.

The President explained that an Executive Committee election had not been held in Michaelmas, as it would usually have been, due to administrative difficulties arising in the absence of a President. In line with the constitution, and after consultation with the Junior Proctor, an Executive Committee election to elect officers for the remainder of the calendar year would be held as soon as possible. This would likely be after the Lent sabbatical officer elections, as running two elections simultaneously could be confusing.

The scheme and electoral dates were approved.

(d) Election rules for the GU Presidential Election 2016

The rules were reported.

The Council asked about the meaning of "vexatious" complaints. The President explained the meaning of "vexatious" was a decision for the Elections Committee, but that such decisions could be appealed to the Junior Proctor.

The Council then asked for clarification on the role and makeup of the GU Elections Committee. The President explained that the GU Elections Committee would comprise the GU Returning Officer alongside the CUSU Elections Committee. It would not act as a body of appeal separate to the CUSU Elections Committee, but representation from the GU Returning Officer would ensure that the GU had a say in decision-making on matters relating to the GU Presidential election.

Mark Driver (Robinson MCR) was appointed to the role of GU Returning Officer, with no objection.

(e) Affiliation Fees 2015-16

Common Room Affiliation Fees are determined by the Council. Council had last set the fees at £3.50 per full-time graduate student, and the President reported that he would not ask the Council to alter this. Council approved this decision.

The Council asked how student numbers would be calculated. The acting-secretary reported that the numbers came from the Student Statistics Office, and were a year in arrears.

The President was asked whether the GU was going to follow CUSU in trying to replace affiliation fees with a college levy. The President explained that his view at this stage was a personal one because he believed Council hadn't set any explicit policy on this subject. He believed that affiliation fees had good aspects and bad aspects – it was good that MCRs could wield political influence over the GU from outside the GU's own procedures, but that there was a problematic conflict between the GU's responsibility for providing services to all graduate students and MCRs' responsibilities to get maximum value from their limited budgets for their own members.

C.J. Rauch made the point that if the College Bursar paid the fees rather than the MCR, the money would have to be taken away from the MCR budget; he felt that the current model seemed to work well. The President in response highlighted the problem that it was always strictly in MCRs' interests to disaffiliate, because their members would receive services from the GU with or without their payment. CJR felt that most MCRs would behave altruistically, and that it should remain optional for MCRs to engage and contribute. The President questioned whether "most" MCRs was sufficient.

Philip Luther-Davies suggested that Council could have more power and could select people from its number to take GU roles to save money rather than creating additional Sabbatical Officers. The President highlighted a possible difficulty in getting people who are studying and performing an MCR role to then take up a GU position as well. The Council agreed that there were good reasons for having more than one Sabbatical Officer.

The Council asked how the GU could be held to account. The President felt the best way to do that was through both the Council, and through the external and student members of the Trustee Board. He explained that affiliation fees are not a particularly good motivator in that sense, as non-affiliated colleges could easily be ignored.

The President said that he would continue the discussions, but would not claim to speak for the GU for now. After the meeting, he would set up a working party made up of any interested Council members to present a possible position on affiliation fees to the next Council.

4. Motions to be ratified

There were none.

5. Council discussions and questions to Council

There were none.

6. Ordinary motions

(a) Introduction of a Second Full-Time Sabbatical Officer

The following motion was put to the Council:

The Graduate Union notes:

- 1. As of Academic Year 2015-16, the University has been providing the GU with half-funding for an additional Sabbatical Officer on a two-year trial basis.*
- 2. Sabbatical Officers may either be established by agreement of the Trustees and the Council ad hoc, or else may be permanently established by the Schedules; only Sabbatical Offices established by the Schedules may be Trustees.*
- 3. Amendments to the Schedules require a two-thirds majority vote of the Council and, for certain amendments, the prior permission of the University.*

The Graduate Union believes:

- 1. With only 1.5 Sabbatical Officers, the GU is currently overly reliant on part-time volunteers serving in administrative roles such as Secretary and Treasurer.*
- 2. The introduction of a second full-time Sabbatical Officer affords an opportunity to review the functions of the Executive Committee part-time officers.*

The Graduate Union resolves:

- 1. To endorse amending the Schedules so as to:*
- 2. Establish a full-time Sabbatical Vice-President, who will be a Trustee and will ordinarily be elected for a year running January to December;*
- 3. Define the role of the Vice-President as responsible for campaigning, outreach to MCRs and faculties, engagement with CUSU, running social events, and facilitating GU meetings – thereby leaving the President responsible for representation to the University, financial matters, leadership and strategy, and union development;*
- 4. Remove administrative duties from the Executive Committee, and distribute these amongst the Sabbatical Officers, Trustees and staff;*
- 5. Abolish the Secretary, Treasurer and Welfare Officer; and establish the Accommodation Officer, Finance Officer and Disabled Students' Officer;*
- 6. Refocus the corporate responsibilities of the Executive Committee on student-facing activities, and away from governance; and to make clear the division of responsibilities between themselves, the Trustees, the Sabbatical Officers, and the Council / General Meetings.*

7. *To mandate the President to draft amendments to the Schedules implementing the aforementioned changes; to present these amendments to the University's committee for the supervision of the students' unions (CCSSU); and to return to the Council to present the amendments in good time having responded to the feedback from CCSSU.*

Submitted by the President.

The President explained that it would be waste of effort to go through the process of amending the schedules if the Council had not indicated their assent, in principle, to the changes. The motion gave an outline as to what the role of the second full-time Sabbatical Officer could be, and the President would draft the amendment based on the decision of the Council.

The motivation for the current proposal was that the position needed to be attractive (in competition with the role of President). The President role would become more "dry", and involved in representational and organisational work, while the Vice-President (VP) would do some of the more interesting and fun work of the union. The VP would also act as a check on the power of the President.

The proposal would also move administrative tasks away from the Executive Committee. It has proved difficult to find volunteers to do these kinds of tasks.

The President was asked where the responsibilities of the Welfare & Rights Officer would go, and responded that no change was planned for that officer.

The Council asked whether the VP would be elected or appointed. The President replied that it would be elected, and that it was hoped that the position would run January to December so there would always one officer who has been in office for six months. Usman Javed (WCSA) noted that Master's students would therefore be discouraged from running. The President agreed, but pointed out that Master's rarely run for sabbatical positions anyway. He hoped to be able to attract them to positions within the reformed Executive Committee.

Council asked where the remaining half of the funding for the VP would come from. The President explained that it would be taken from the GU's reserves, as it has been a strategic priority of the GU to save up for this role for some years. The President confirmed that this arrangement could therefore be maintained for a few years only. If the trial was successful, the GU would bid for the second half of the funding. The President acknowledged that there was concerns about recruiting for the role, but hoped that with two full-time officers and a full-time staff member in support the GU roles would be more attractive.

Alice levins (Pembroke GP) asked whether it was problematic split the chain of communication between Council and the university by having the VP focus on one and the President the other. The President confirmed that this had been a concern, but felt it was better to split the roles so that each can do their specific job well and

then communicate, rather than have both officers perform all kinds of tasks to a lower standard.

No speeches were made against the motion.

A vote was taken: 18 were in favour; none against.

The motion was carried.

(b) A campaign for better childcare provision in the University and the city

The following motion was put to the Council:

The Graduate Union notes:

- 1. The establishment of the "Save ARU Nursery" campaign last year (<https://savearunursery.wordpress.com>) to seek to overturn ARU's decision to close its nursery; the campaign has the support of the city's mayor and MP.*
- 2. The insufficiency of childcare across Cambridge, with waiting times for a nursery place in the city in excess of 12 months.*
- 3. That c. 8% of graduates at Cambridge are student parents.*
- 4. That students' unions at Sheffield, Goldsmiths and Swansea provide a nursery for their members.*

The Graduate Union believes:

- 1. That the provision of affordable, accessible childcare is a requirement for the University to be open to graduate students of all backgrounds.*

The Graduate Union resolves:

- 1. To officially endorse and support the "Save ARU Nursery" campaign.*
- 2. To launch our own campaign for adequate childcare provision in the University and the city, to be coordinated by the President and the Families Officer, with the long-term goal of collaborating with the University and any other relevant parties to establish a GU- or University-provided childcare service affordable and accessible to graduate students, in the model of other nursery provision by universities and students' unions across the UK.*
- 3. To mandate the above Officers to report on the progress and activities of the campaign at each meeting of Council until further notice.*

Submitted by the President and the Welfare & Rights Officer.

The President explained that he thought it would be a good idea for the Council to agree on a project which graduates would benefit from and then do some campaigning work. He lamented that the GU had seemed to spend more time looking after itself than working for graduates.

Childcare had been proposed for the campaign as it was a topical issue: ARU nursery was under threat of closure, and there is already a shortage of childcare across the city. The closure would therefore be bad for graduate students at the University of Cambridge. This was therefore a good opportunity to make the case to University that resources should be put into resolving the situation. The University wants to be able to attract all graduates, from all demographics.

No speeches were made against the motion.

Philip Luther-Davies commented that, while he was wholly in favour of the motion, he was concerned about selling it to some graduates who were not concerned with childcare. The President acknowledged the point – but noted that MCRs did a great job catering to such students, whereas childcare was one of the cracks that the GU can help fill in. Such issues are best coordinated centrally at university level.

A vote was taken: 18 were in favour; none against.

The motion was carried.

7. Emergency motions

There were none.

8. Elections by Council

(a) Appointment of student trustees

The President outlined the role of Student Trustee. There were currently two vacancies, arising from the resignations of the previous two Student Trustees.

The President had solicited applications via the Council list, and requested that Council members themselves solicit applications from their constituents. A notice advertising the vacancies had been on the GU website for several months.

Two suitable applications had been received, from Fatima Baldo and Ben Alexander-Dann. These applicants had been nominated for appointment by the Executive Committee.

The President read out short biographies of each nominee.

No objections were raised.

The nominees could be appointed by a two-thirds vote of the Council. The two-thirds quota of voting members present was 12 votes.

A vote was taken: 13 were in favour; none against.

FB and BAD were duly appointed Student Trustees until the end of academic year 2016-17 (*i.e.* up to 30th September 2017)

9. Any other business

2016.1.9 (a) Philip Luther-Davies asked about the relationship between the GU and University and College Union (UCU).

The President replied that he knew of no reason PhD students could not join UCU, and saw no conflict between the unions.

The Council asked whether the GU had a position on the matter. The President responded that the GU had no official position as the Council had not set one, though he would have no objections if the Council wished to do so.

The Council requested that the President bring an item on the matter to the next Council, in addition to some material on pensions and long-term financial planning.

2016.1.9 (b) The Council asked whether there was a date for the next meeting.

The President said that the Council were required to meet termly, but could meet more frequently. He asked whether the Council would like to meet again in later in the Term – there was a mix of responses.

The President agreed to send out a Doodle poll, and then arrange another meeting or not depending on the response.

With the permission of Council, the Chair closed the meeting.