



Graduate Union Minutes of a Meeting of the Student Council

Held at 7pm on 22 September 2016, in the CUSU/GU Lounge at 17 Mill Lane

Voting members of Council present:

Representing the Affiliated Common Rooms:

- Elisabeth Chen (Christ's MCR)
- Clara Tang (Churchill MCR)
- Tobias Roeder (Clare MCR)
- Rachel Evans (Emmanuel MCR)
- Millie Papworth (Fitzwilliam MCR)
- Fatima Baldo (Murray Edwards MCR)
- Craig Burns (Pembroke GP)
- Leonardo Paoli (Peterhouse MCR)
- Mark Driver (Robinson MCR)
- Isabelle Bush (Selwyn MCR)
- Jean Maillard (St John's SBR)
- Filip Szczypinski (Trinity BA Soc)

Representing CUSU:

- Amatey Doku (CUSU President)

Representing the Faculties:

Voting members of Council present by proxy:

Representing the Affiliated Common Rooms:

- Ettie Unwin (Jesus MCR)
- Annabel Taylor (St Catharine's MCR)

Representing the Faculties:

Non-voting members of Council present:

- Chad Allen (President)
- Simon Graham (Families Officer)
- Katharina Greve (Communications Officer)
- Mrittunjoy Guha-Madjumdar (International Officer)
- Zoe Ye (Welfare Officer)

Other GU Members in attendance:

- Mark Mawdsley (Queen's)
- Jennifer Holian (Jesus)
- Nicholas Langford (Hughes Hall)
- Elaine Gray (Darwin)

Also in attendance:

- Rob Richardson (GU Manager – acting as Secretary)

The Council appointed the President to Chair the meeting.

There were 14 voting members of Council (or their proxies) present, so the meeting was quorate.

Meeting opened at 19.01

1. Approval of the minutes of the previous Council meeting

The minutes of the Council held on 18 June 2016 were approved.

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

No matters arising

3. Reports to Council from Sabbatical Officers and Officers of the Executive Committee

The President reported. He, alongside the CUSU sabbatical officers, had met with Daniel Zeichner to discuss- among other issues- the impacts of the EU Referendum upon students. The government is moving forward with the Higher Education Bill more swiftly than was expected, and the President is concerned that postgraduate students have not been given sufficient consideration within the proposals for a Teaching Excellence Frameworks. This, alongside the ongoing review of the Research Excellence Framework, means the President's representational work will be key this academic year.

Much time had gone into re-drafting elements of the constitution, which have become necessary following two years of practical use. Draft amendments are being presented to CCSSU next week and will hopefully be available for formal consideration by GU Council in Michaelmas Term. One of the main outcomes of the changes is to enable the Vice-President to act as a Trustee.

The President has been seeking to improve the professional appearance of the GU through a rebrand. In pursuit of this he has secured an exceptional discount from a high-profile branding firm.

The revamp of gown services has been extremely successful and the GU is looking to develop this further by purchasing gowns wholesale. Thanks to significant input from the Families Officer the GU, it is hoped, will soon be able to implement a storage solution whereby students will be able to leave boxes of possessions with the GU to be taken to a storage site during vacations.

The President regretted being unable to provide more support to part-time officers but other aspects of his role had required prioritising. Similarly, improving communication with MCRs is a key focus, and it will be a key part of the new VP's role to pursue this.

The Families Officer reported on his activities. He had been contacting MCR officers responsible for student families within their MCR, aiming to identify how the GU could work with them more effectively. A welcome event for families is planned for the end of freshers' week.

The Communications Officer had been promoting the events and services of the GU, particularly in the run up to the new term. She aims to concentrate more on supporting MCRs in communicating their events across the collegiate University.

The International Officers had met with the International Student Team to discuss orientation events for incoming students and would soon be participating in these. They were also planning other cultural activities for the term ahead.

A member of Council asked for the GU's support on an issue affecting international students following the UK's decision to leave the EU. Students will soon require comprehensive health insurance if changes to the EHIC scheme arise. The President would liaise with the Council member to help communicate this to students.

Another member asked whether students of disaffiliated colleges were permitted to attend events for families. The President clarified that students remain members of the GU as individuals regardless of whether their MCR is affiliated.

4. Motions to be ratified

There were none.

5. Council discussions and questions to Council

The President asked Council whether there is a preferred time for meetings. There was no real consensus, so the President indicated he would follow up with a poll to ascertain availability for meetings this term.

The President noted that he and the CUSU President would be attending MCR welcome talks together to outline the roles of the central unions.

6. Ordinary motions

(a) Affiliation fees 2016-17

The following motion was put to the Council:

Resolved: the recommendations in paper C.160922.A be approved

Submitted by the President

The President outlined the paper regarding affiliation fees for the academic year 2016-17. Following initial feedback, the President proposed that the vote be taken in parts, so that the proposed rebate, the fee level for 16-17 and a proposed introductory rate for MCRs re-affiliating to the GU were voted on separately.

In relation to the proposed rebate, a member raised the issue that some colleges pay directly as opposed to the MCR, meaning the MCR would not benefit from a rebate. The President noted that while the current proposal was for the rebate to be paid as a credit on next year's affiliation fees, he would investigate whether it could be paid by cheque instead.

A member recalled the last Council meeting discussing fees moving towards a mixed-model system comprising a levy paid by the college and a nominal affiliation fee paid by the MCR. A rebate under the new system would be more meaningful to many MCRs.

The Families Officer suggested rebated funds be placed into a 'pot' to which MCRs could apply for support with events and other activities. The President asked whether, as there appeared to be no fundamental objection to the principle of the rebate, MCRs would accept a solution whereby those that received the money directly would receive it as a credit on the next fee invoice, and for other MCRs, if a cheque payment was not possible the rebate would be given via a pooled fund.

A vote was taken on the first resolution: all were in favour; none against.

The second recommendation concerned the affiliation fee for the upcoming academic year. The President proposed moving back to charging fees based on the numbers of part-time students as well as full-time, as the number of part-time students at a college does not correlate to the number of full-time students it has. A fee per 'full-time equivalent' is proposed. This system would also include a tapering element, with fees per student decreasing once applied to students above a numeric threshold, because currently very large colleges were unfairly penalised.

The CUSU President asked whether the colleges most benefiting from the tapering system would stay the same year to year. The GU President felt it likely that many would stay the same, but the student numbers (which form the basis for fees) change year on year this is not guaranteed.

A vote was taken on the second resolution: all were in favour; none against.

The President acknowledged that it is not fully fair on MCRs paying full affiliation fees every year to offer a discount to disaffiliated MCRs. But, his conversations with disaffiliated MCRs have shown that it is very difficult to encourage MCRs to reaffiliate- especially if they are large MCRs and the cost is extremely high. If an MCR has been disaffiliated for some time, it is likely the funds previously marked for affiliation fees are now being spent elsewhere. The President noted that if more colleges are affiliated, the GU can afford to reduce fees for all MCRs and that the representation the GU provides is stronger, more informed and better value for money, as Council will comprise a more diverse range of MCRs.

The Murray Edwards member asked whether MCRs could disaffiliate for a short period and benefit from the fee reduction. The President noted that the proposal states an MCR must be disaffiliated for 365 days before it can benefit from the reduction. It was noted that Council policy could also change this system at a later date if Council wished.

Council was asked for any objections. None were raised.

A vote was taken on the third resolution: 13 in favour; none against.

All three parts of the motion were carried.

(b) Establishment of the Vice-President, and GU Michaelmas Election

The following motion was put to the Council:

Resolved:

- 1. that the decision of the Board of Trustees to establish the Sabbatical Officer position of Vice-President in accordance with paper C.160922.B be ratified;*
- 2. that the GU hold an election for the Part-Time Officers and the Vice-President to take office on 1 January, in accordance with the electoral scheme C.160922.C.*
- 3. that an Election Committee to oversee this election be convened, comprising [to be determined by the meeting].*

Submitted by the President

The President noted that previous Councils had mandated him to bring a job description for the Vice-President, and that GU policy existed resolving that the office should be established. This is also in line with University expectation- the GU is receiving funds specifically for this role and the University expressed great support for it within the recent Review of Graduate Representation. He outlined how the VP would focus on MCR and

student engagement, leading the part-time officers, and heading the GU's student-facing work such as campaigns.

It had previously been accepted by Council that the part-time roles of Treasurer and Secretary would not be elected as the full-time Manager position took on most of these responsibilities, and it was now proposed that the Communications Officer also not be elected as many of their duties will be taken on by the Vice-President. The Executive Committee instead intends to appoint a Head of Publicity, whose remit would dovetail more cohesively with the other roles on the Executive Committee.

The President also noted the intention to pay an honorarium to part-time officers at a rate equivalent to approximately one supervision per week.

A Council member asked other MCRs when they hold their elections. Many are held towards the end of Michaelmas Term, and a GU election clashing with this was to be avoided. The President reminded Council of the aim for the GU President to still be elected in Lent Term to serve July to July, with the Vice-President and part-time officers being elected in Michaelmas to serve January to December.

A Council member asked whether this timetable would prevent PGT students from running for VP. Unfortunately this was likely, but it is extremely rare for PGT students to run for sabbatical office. It was accepted that as the election for VP is mainly to be aimed at PhD students, the advantages of electing at this time of year outweighed the disadvantages. It was strongly hoped that PGT students could be recruited to run for part-time officer positions, with promotion at the Freshers' Fair a particular opportunity for recruitment.

A Council member asked whether scope existed change the timetable of the election. The President expressed regret that he is due to be on leave later in term and wished to be present to oversee the election. Also, if for any reason the election is unsuccessful, there would still be time within Michaelmas Term to rerun it under the proposed schedule. The Communications Officer noted that the MCRs' support would be very important in publicising the election and generating interest among potential candidates.

The President, as Returning Officer, invited members of Council to run for the Elections Committee. The CUSU President, Fatima Baldo and Mark Driver put themselves forward as Elections Committee members.

A vote was taken: all in favour; none against.

The motion was carried.

7. Emergency motions

There were none.

8. Elections by Council

There were none.

9. Any other business

An MCR representatives' pub crawl will be taking place on Saturday.

The President invited any representatives who wished him or the CUSU President to speak at a welcome event to be in touch. A member suggested that the President put together a brief summary or marketing pitch about the GU to be circulated so that it could be delivered to new students.

Meeting closed at 20.02