



Graduate Union
Minutes of a Meeting of the Student Council

Held at 7pm on 20 March 2017, in the CUSU/GU Lounge at 17 Mill Lane

Voting members of Council present:

Representing the Affiliated Common Rooms:

- Tobias Roeder (Clare MCR)
- Tom Chudley (Downing MCR)
- Susanna O'Brien (Emmanuel MCR)
- Gabrielle McHarg (Fitzwilliam MCR)
- Hugo Larose (Gonville and Caius MCR)
- Rachel Crosby (Newnham MCR)
- Mark Driver (Robinson MCR)
- Filip Szczypinski (Trinity BA Society)
- Sebastian Wrobel (Wolfson College Students' Association)

Representing the Faculties:

Voting members of Council present by proxy:

Representing the Affiliated Common Rooms:

- Craig Burns (Pembroke Graduate Parlour)

Representing CUSU:

- Amatey Doku (CUSU President)

Non-voting members of Council present:

- Chad Allen (President)
- Ellie Chan (Vice-President)
- Sophie Buck (CUSU-GU Welfare & Rights Officer)
- Sophia D'Angelo (International Officer)

Other GU Members in attendance:

- James Gladrow (Corpus Christi College)
- David Wade (St. Catharine's College)

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

Meeting opened at 19.03

1. Approval of the minutes of the previous Council meeting

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 30 January 2017 were approved.

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) President's Report

Acting as Returning Officer in the CUSU-GU elections had been a major focus of the President this Term. This involved a re-write of the rules in an endeavour to facilitate a more open election, with these changes applying to the GU positions being elected, and will likely apply to the President by-election next term. The President congratulated Micha Frazer-Carroll on her election as CUSU-GU Welfare & Rights Officer, but unfortunately no candidate for GU President had come forward. The details of a by-election would be covered under item 6.(a) on the agenda.

The last meeting of Council had passed policy to advocate for a facility on university cards that would provide electronic card access for families of students to university space if permitted by colleges and departments. The GU Families Officers had been working on this and had spoken to institutions that already used such an arrangement, including the University Centre and Emmanuel College, and this good practice was feeding into the President's proposal to the University's Card Committee.

Within the President's committee-based work, the Board of Graduate Studies had been considering how to define what constitutes a thesis, and the President welcomed views from members on this. The University's new harassment and sexual misconduct policy was now live, and the President encouraged members to find the University's corresponding website for further information. Colleges were now updating their own policies to dovetail with the University's; this was likely to lead to a review of other related policies within the colleges, and the President and the CUSU President were both willing to offer support to M/JCRs in working with their colleges on these changes.

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is due to come into force in May 2018. This will bring significant changes to data protection law, and there will be implications for the GU, including the ability to receive a list of members from the University, which may also be the case for MCRs. The President intends to compile a briefing document for MCRs on the implications of the GDPR.

Good progress has been made on the proposed levy system to replace affiliation fees, and senior key figures were supportive of the GU and CUSU in their aims. Meanwhile, affiliation fee invoices had been sent out a few weeks previously, and contained a saving for MCRs on previous years due to the large number of paying colleges and the GU collecting more than was budgeted for last year.

Following a passing of a motion put forward by Zero Carbon at a previous Council meeting, the President continued to work in support of divestment, although this required careful consideration alongside his role as a member of University Council. He reminded the GU Council that it remains GU policy to campaign for divestment.

Work had begun on the President's annual report and handover document. However, the success of these relies heavily on a new President being elected. There was a serious danger that the GU's legitimacy would come into question if no candidates were to come forward as one of the primary reasons for the GU continuing to receive support from the University was the belief that graduate students were strongly in favour of maintaining a separate GU.

Similarly, student trustee recruitment would occur imminently, with a document calling for expressions of interest to be circulated with the minutes of this meeting.

The President had been contacted by MCRs who were noticing increasing institutional pressure relating to their serving of alcohol, and he would be working to support MCRs in navigating licensing regulations in relation to their bars.

The full rebrand was very near to completion, and would be launched next term alongside a revamped GU Bulletin. Further views from members as to the form and content of a bulletin would be gratefully received.

(b) Vice-President's Report

The Vice-President continued to work on the postgraduate alternative prospectus, and had been compiling information on the graduate experience at each college. She requested submissions from Council members in order to provide accurate information on this, with a particular focus on details that are unique to their college. She hoped to compile this information by the start of May.

Following the passing of policy to support the HeForShe campaign at the last meeting, the Vice-President had been in talks with HeForShe and the University's Equality and Diversity Division. Some draft commitments were being discussed, which both parties were happy with, and she noted the positivity with which both parties were approaching the agreement. To raise awareness of this, the GU hoped to run an event focussing on the gendered experience of graduate students within academic, inspired by the large number of female PhD students that do not continue into academia, which the Equality and Diversity Division was keen to assist with.

The Vice-President provided updates on behalf of some of the part-time officers. The GU was running an Ed Balls Day picnic 28 April, to which all were welcome, and the first round of the Three-Minute Thesis had been very successful, with finalists selected to compete again in May.

Following enquiries from stakeholders within the collegiate university, the GU was planning to put together some ideas for Easter holiday activities for students isolated over the vacation. This would not be on the scale of the more thorough Christmas Vacation guide, but might provide suggestions to students during what can be a quiet period.

The International Officer reported that she had been working on a Race Equality Charter with the University's Equality and Diversity Division.

(c) Welfare & Rights Officer's Report

The Welfare & Rights Officer had been updating the CUSU website with details of sources of support available to students, which supplements more thorough guides produced previously.

The University Counselling Service plans to run two workshops in specifically for graduate students just before the start of Easter Term in conjunction with the GU. One would cover time management, and the other would concern managing the supervisor relationship. Details would be posted on the GU Facebook page shortly.

4. Motions to be ratified

There were none.

5. Council discussions and questions to Council

(a) Postgraduate Open Day

A paper giving an overview of plans for the 2017 Open Day was circulated (C.170320.A)

The coordinator of the Postgraduate Open Day had been due to present to the Council but unfortunately had to cancel at short notice. The presentation would be rearranged for the next meeting.

The President asked how Council members would feel about hosting guest speakers more regularly; contacts in the University often ask how they might interact with MCR representatives. Members felt it would be appropriate if relevant and time efficient, and if members were able to discuss the contents in a private space afterwards. The Council agreed that a speaker would need to be invited by the Council prior to their attendance.

6. Ordinary motions

(a) President By-Election

A copy of the relevant regulations (C.170320.B) was circulated.

The following motion was put to the Council:

Whereas:

1. the Council has called an election for the next President of the GU, originally scheduled to take place from 7 to 10 March;
2. the Council has delegated the conduct of this election to CUSU; and
3. no nominations were received for this position following the original close of nominations;

Resolved:

1. that the original delegation of the conduct of this election to CUSU be maintained; and
2. that the CUSU Elections Committee re-open nominations for a by-election to be held in the Easter Term according to a schedule to be determined and publicised by the Committee, giving at least 24 days' notice of the opening of the ballot."

Submitted by Chad Allen, GU President and Ellie Chan, GU Vice-President

The President noted that the Council was responsible for calling elections. The primary question for the Council posed by the motion was whether it was happy to continue delegating to the CUSU Elections Committee.

A member asked whether the CUSU Elections Committee had been approached as to whether it was content to run the election. The President noted that it had not been officially approached, however, positive information conversations had been held. Undergraduate members of the Committee would have the opportunity to resign, and that he, the Vice-President and the CUSU President and CUSU Education Officer would remain members of the committee in this event. The CUSU President noted that CUSU plans to hold a by-election for the position of Ethical Affairs Officer, so its Elections Committee would likely be active next term regardless.

Speeches against the motion were invited; no members wished to make a speech.

A vote was taken: eleven votes in favour; none against. The motion passes.

(b) Memorandum of Understanding

A copy of the proposed Memorandum of Understanding was circulated (C.170320.C)

The following motion was put to the Council:

Resolved: To approve and adopt the Memorandum of Understanding between the Graduate Union and Cambridge University Students' Union (C.170320.C)

Submitted by Chad Allen, GU President

The Review of the Representation of Graduate Students had recommended closer working between the GU and CUSU, and this would be underpinned by a Memorandum of Understanding. The MoU was light on content, but was designed as a framework so that future ventures could be added. It was primarily intended to act as a safeguard against future officer teams seeking to undermine the commitments to co-working that had previously been made. The MoU had been approved by the Chair of the Review Committee (the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education), and by the University's Council Committee for the Supervision of the Student Unions.

A member noted that as individuals with institutional memory move on, a framework to remind officers what should be happening would be extremely useful. The President agreed and felt that conflict resolution mechanisms, for instance, were especially helpful.

Speeches against the motion were invited; no members wished to make a speech.

A vote was taken: eleven votes in favour; none against. The motion passes.

The President noted that the MoU would take effect once it had been approved by CUSU Council.

7. Emergency motions

There were none.

8. Elections by Council

(a) Election of a Chair

No election would be held at this meeting due to previously interested candidates having withdrawn their interest.

The President invited views on whether Council believed having an independent Chair to be of value; any change to protocol could be incorporated within the current round of constitutional amendments being carried out.

A member enquired as to the advantage of having an independent Chair. The President noted that Council has the ability to hold officers to account, and their Chairing meetings could be problematic if an instance of Council wishing to disagree with an officer arose.

Another member suggested continuing to have an independent Chair as the norm, but with the option of an officer Chairing being maintained if no independent Chair is appointed. Council agreed to this.

9. Dates of upcoming meetings

The dates of upcoming meetings of GU Council are as follows:

Easter Term:

Monday 8 May 2017

Monday 12 June 2017

Long vacation:

Monday 10 July 2017

Monday 4 September 2017

Michaelmas Term:

Monday 16 October

Monday 4 December 2017

All at 7pm in the GU Lounge

10. Any Other Business

The CUSU President asked any affiliated MCRs whose representatives were not in the CUSU Presidents and Externals Facebook group to contact him.

He was planning to launch a project aimed at enabling JCRs and MCRs to share information with one another; a CUSU Annual Return. He proposed that CUSU collect a set of data each year using defined questions, so that other M/JCRs could access the complete information. It was hoped that a culture of sharing would be established that would lead to greater collaboration away from this exercise.

A member asked how the information would be shared. The CUSU President noted it would be with Presidents and External Officers. Another member enquired as to whether M/JCRs would be able to work around the system and access the full dataset while only submitting minimal answers themselves. The CUSU President did not believe there would be a fact-checking process, but the underlying principle was that J/MCRs would likely get out what they put in.

In response to further questions, the President noted that data would represent a snapshot of when it was submitted and would need to be dated, and invited suggestions for questions to include to be sent to him before the end of the week.

Council was supportive of the project.

The W&RO noted that separate information would be collated as part of the Welfare Grid project. There was discussion about whether collating all questions together in the same questionnaire would be useful, but the Welfare Grid was focussed on communicating with welfare officers and it was agreed that separating out different areas of work continued to be advantageous.

The Vice-President announced that the next Council formal dinner would be happening at Queen's at the start of Easter Term. She invited interest from attendees who would be willing to host a Council social at their own college.

Council minutes, 20 March 2017

Meeting closed at 19.42.

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