



# GRADUATE UNION

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

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# *Graduate Union Council*

19/03/18

19.00 at the Graduate Union, 17 Mill Lane

## **Present:**

### **Name**

Tess Skyrme  
Rachel Crosby  
Amelia Drew  
Ellen Robertson  
Joe Cotton  
Taylor Sauders-Wood  
Sofia Ropek-Hewson  
Lu Liu  
Pavao Santak

### **Title**

Girton MCR President  
External Officer, Newnham  
MCR President, Gonville and Caius  
Murray Edwards MCR President  
HSPS faculty Board Representative  
Jesus College MCR President  
Pembroke MCR President  
Graduate Representative, Lucy Cavendish  
Fitzwilliam College MCR President

## **In attendance:**

### **Name**

Dr Darshana Joshi  
Micha Frazer-Carroll  
Mrittunjoy Guha Majumdar  
Bridget Shaffrey  
David Chukwuma Izuogu  
Freddy Foks  
Quentin Peter  
Ali Chahine

### **Title**

President and Chair of Council  
Welfare and Rights Officer  
Part-Time Welfare Officer  
Women's Officer  
International Officer  
Trinity Hall / UCU rep  
Queens MCR External Rep  
General Manager and minute take

## **Apologies for absence:**

### **Name**

Conor Bacon  
Charlotte Kenealy  
Laura Wey

### **Title**

KGSA  
St Catharine's MCR  
Corpus Christi

GU Council [Paper]

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### **1. Minutes**

Council received the minutes of the last meeting. With two minor corrections to names, the minutes were approved

### **2. Matters arising**

The President noted that she wanted to increase the amount of guest that attended in future, such as the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education. It is important and would like this to continue. It means that it becomes easier to hold Officers of the University to account, as PG deserve the same level of care, the university only sometime , housing, counselling, pastoral, families,-

### **3. Update, student and external trustee**

It was hoped that we would be able to bring the nominations of the executive to the next meeting, as well as start the search for our student trustees.

### **4. UCU strike**

The President noted that the Executive committee had decided to support the aims of the strike, and had emailed council with this view. We received replies from 9 positive and 1 negative. On the day of the strike we were contacted by St John's (Samuel Butler Room) and Trinity (BA Society) to have more information. The GU had prepared a fact sheet for MCRs and our members, but this was held up due to an "Ultra Vires" investigation (the Trustee were making sure our actions were legal) but was circulated later that day. Council was asked if they found the information useful?

The Girton representative noted that they did not feel they could sign the template motion that was circulated. It was noted that this was a motion circulated was from the UCU, not the Graduate Union. It was clarified that though the executive supported the aims of the strike, without express approval from Council, they were unwilling to support all the strike activity. It meant the advice that was circulated was fairly neutral and emphasised that picket lines can be crossed, but we believe this should be done respectfully.

A discussion was held whether one could support the strike and give neutral information. Girton and Jesus MCRs had felt from their members a neutral stance was for the best. Newnham, Pembroke and the GU Women's Officer felt that supporting the strike was important for their members futures. Some felt that neutrality was perhaps taking a stance against the strikes aims, though they respected MCRs needed to reflect the wishes of their members.



### **MPhil/St Students and the strikes**

It was noted that overall, Masters students, had suffered the most, and that the GU had received representations from the Education department. They noted that information was not effectively distributed, and that these students were less likely to be aware of help available to them. Though an education task force had been set up, the departments seemed to be slow to work with it. Though it was felt that this is not frame this as students against lecturers.

The Lucy Cavendish representative noted that their college had surveyed master students about what support they needed, and this good practice should be circulated.

It was suggested that members should email at the VC, a concern was that though knew the strikes were coming, there was a lack of preparation for them. It was noted that due to the grey area, it was not always clear who should be delivering what, as teaching is split between Colleges and University. This exasperated the situation, especially for Arts students, where for STEM it was business as usual.

The Queens' representative noted that it was very un-nerving crossing the picket line. They noted that better guidelines on this. It was noted that some of the picketers proved to be rather rude, and did not appreciate that some of the tasks included keeping animals fed in departments. The Girton representative noted that the phrase came across as ominous to students, and perhaps better phrasing in future would help.

*Overall Council decided to maintain the Status Quo, noting that though there was support for UCU stance on pensions, though to what extent MCRs should engage in the strike actions varied. Some felt they were best placed to advise students on their rights, and explain multiple points of view, where others felt the best way forward was to support the strike to bring a quickest resolution.*

### **5. Introduction to the UCU graduate representative.**

Freddie Fox was looking to engage with GU. He noted that the UCU was interested in students as workers, not as students. But many students were engaged in badly, or unpaid contracts. He noted a number of figures from a recent survey. Of lack of consistency, and what counted as a work hour, as opposed to unpaid preparation hours.

History and Modern languages are “rewarding” students with teaching opportunities, which they do free of charge, as a training opportunity. The UCU Grads felt that it was good opportunity to engage other UCU members to resist these changes. He asked for councils support:

- To sign the open letter to circulated against casualisation
- For MCRs to circulate to their members
- Lobby their College against this

FF was thanked for his time.



It was additionally noted that some MCRs had co-opted a UCU rep to ensure smooth communication between the two.

## 6. Motions

*Motion to amend the by-laws to introduce Black and Minority Ethnic and Disabled Officers, as well as a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer + Officer on to the Executive Committee*

The motion was introduced by the Women's Officer; she noted the need for more politicised representation of marginalised groups. It was noted that MCR would be more likely to adopt these if the GU led. Though these positions can be unfilled in MCRs, which is the fault of the MCRs not engaging these communities affectively.

The Part-time Welfare Officer notes that he supports this motion, but does not think that the positions should exist in isolation, but notes that it is important that we need to make sure that the positions work in such a way that intersectionality is taken into account.

The Jesus rep noted that their LGBT+ members wanted more events where they could form a community.

Due to members having to leave, Council was no longer quorate, but the 8 voting member present held a non-binding vote in favour.

## Election,

It was noted that Joe Cotton, one of the candidates has been disqualified pending a review from the Proctors, with Sophia Ropek Hewson provisionally declared president. A new welfare and rights officer Christine had been also elected.

## Report

President,

- Returned from wedding in India on the 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb,
- Is continuing to see how best to support students affected by the strikes
- Had been the Returning Officer for the recent elections on behalf of Council, and that had taken up a lot of her time
- Is looking to organise a Mental Health Week,
- Pushing the University on the parity of care with UG,

**VP-** Is ill report be starting supporting for full time

Women's Officer-

- Trying to get the university to revise the disciplinary procedure, and to have just one code of conduct. She noted that she was already working with Kings Women's Grad rep
- Also look at sexual mis-conduct during fieldwork, and support available

PT Welfare-Officer



- With the end of the elections will be supporting the president with the strikes

#### International Officer

- Looking to organise an international festival in MT, and will be looking to work with the colleges
- He also had been working with the career office, trying to make student understand alternatives to being an academic, in the UK and Abroad.

#### WARO –

- Has been raising awareness raising on welfare and intersectionality
- Hosted an event on race and well being,
- Had done some work with sisters uncut,
- Had released a guide, and a launch event on Supporting Your Friends, -
- Autism social group, went really well,
- Strikes have taken up a lot of time, and had been answering queries from college Welfare Officers
- Had released Welfare and Study Skills and Extenuating Circumstance guides
- Opened up the lounge for use as an alternative study space
- Study skills swap.
- BME counsellors, survey results pointed this was something that
- MCR training for those have been elected,
- Self care 101 guide written so can be carried out in MCRs and was looking to circulate to departments