



# GRADUATE UNION

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Draft minutes

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# *Graduate Union Council Minutes (Draft)*

04/12/17

Graduate Union Lounge, 17 Mill Lane, 7pm

## **Members Representing Voting constituencies:**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Representing</b>
Klara Kulenkampff	Emmanuel MCR
Mark Burrell	BA Society (Trinity College)
Juras Mavracic	Robinson MCR
Sarah Paris	St Catherine's MCR
Eoin Carter	History of Philosophy of Science
Eloise Davies	Peterhouse MCR
Hugo Larose	Gonville and Caius MCR
Rachel Crosby	Newnham MCR
Taylor Saunders-Woods	Jesus MCR
Tess Skyrme	Girton MCR
Sofiea Hewson	Pembroke Graduate Parlour
Martijn Lugten	Clare MCR

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## Ex-officio

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>
Darshana Joshi	President and Chair
Ellie Chan	Vice-President and Secretary
Micha Frazer-Carroll	Welfare and Rights Officer

## Non-voting members present

<b>Name</b>	<b>College</b>
Quentin Peter	Queens College
Laura Wey	Corpus Christi College
Ben Jackson	Pembroke College
Tiago Barros	Emmanuel MCR

## In attendance:

Ali Chahine	General Manager and appointed deputy to the Secretary
Kerri Gardner	Student Registry/ Board of Graduate Studies



1. **Welcome** The Chair opened the meeting by thanking to Dr Ellie Chan, the outgoing Vice-President and the Secretary of GU Council for her valuable contributions to the office.

She then introduced Kerri Gardner (KG), Head of Graduate Student Administration at the Student's Registry. KG had a number of updates to communicate to PG students and also sought their feedback on the following

- Students can now work 10 hours a week on any paid work which would help them develop skills for furthering their career as opposed to older requirements of it being academic work within the collegiate university.
- CAMSIS - Change of circumstances forms updated. If there is a delay at any authorizing stage, after 2 weekly reminders it will automatically move on to the next stage.
- KG noted that the forms themselves are in need of updating, as mostly they do not give a chance for students to give the information that they would like to supply.
- She further spoke about the new requirement of submitting an e-thesis during your final submission from the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2017. Due to issues and uncertainties around the copywrite laws all thesis are on an embargo until the issues are resolved. If required, the students could request for a further embargo on their thesis.
- Council felt a bit unclear about the procedure and it was agreed that the GU would seek to organize some workshops with the University Library's office of Scholarly Communication about the e-thesis submission requirement.

**Code of practice for research students.** It was noted that Council previously discussed at length on making this better implemented and more widely known. Council felt that sending an electronic copy to the students would help complement a hard copy.

Council noted that it is important for the students to be aware of a document that empowers them. But it was not felt to be implemented widely in departments and faculties by staff, so its relevance was minimal.

**PG Students' Reporting and Feedback Project** – The students' registry along with UIS is working towards making it easier and more accessible for Supervisors to fill in the termly reports of their graduate students. It was noted that staff see them as cumbersome, and a very small number of supervisors actually end them filling up.

Student feedback – Along the lines of Masters' self evaluation form a new form is being developed for all the PG students at the university to keep track of their own progress. As per the GBEC recommendation, this is a student initiated feedback and has to be done at least once a year. KG sought the opinion of council whether they think the CamRDF should be integrated as a part of it or not. Council expressed a number of concerns, and asked what it was looking to achieve. Council noted that a lot of the

concerns they see from students are about supervisors themselves and it would be good to have a mechanism to keep track of those issues as well, some of which might not be serious enough to go through an official complaints procedure. KG noted a number of ways they can refer issues with supervisors.

The Chair thanked KG for her comment, and hoped she would return in future to speak to our council.

### **1. approval of minutes, content**

Council noted a couple of corrections in the spelling of names of MCRs and attendees, but the minutes were overall approved

2. **Matters arising: CUEF.** The University also recently changed its rules, so we are considered too small to invest in the scheme. It was also noted for ethical reason we may not, as noted in the “paradise papers” and the grace which went to Senate House on divestment.

Council asked what we would invest our reserves in now. The president noted that they stay in the bank for the moment, though we will seek council’s opinion if we decide to invest it strategically for income generation. Council indicated that they thought investing the money in a safe scheme, to generate some income seemed to be a good idea.

3. **Update from the Head of Graduate Student Administration)** It was noted that Kerri Gardner had already presented her piece

### **4. President’s report**

The President noted that since the last meeting, she had attended a number of committees, such as the PG reporting and feedback project. She has noted how the whole supervisor-supervisee can become toxic and the importance of mitigating issues as they arise. We have tried to stress this elsewhere in the University committee structure. Part of the issue is that the quality of experience of a PHD relies on the relationship a student has with their supervisor. If this relationship is not positive, it can affect a student’s future career, as well as their thesis. Improving and mitigating this is an important part of safeguarding the rights of the individuals, though she noted this is a widespread issue globally, not just in this University.

She also highlighted that there are far less Graduate Tutors than UG tutors. This makes it far easier for Graduates to fall through the cracks. The President hopes to look into this and report back in the Easter Term.

Other Committees the President has attended include the part-time Master consultation, Brexit advisory group, beginning 2<sup>nd</sup> week of January. This is looking for guidelines in



what the University needs to do. As well as this, she has attended the usual committees, such as General Board Education Committee, General Board, those these generally look at UG issue. She hopes to attend the 8<sup>th</sup> UK PG representative's conference, and also look to push NUS to pay more attention to PG nationally. Otherwise she is pushing for alternative platforms to represent PG students nationally.

### **Vice President**

Noted that she was concentrating on finishing her handover document. She had spent a large amount of time on the Winter Guide,

She noted that her last day in office would be 14<sup>th</sup> December. She noted that if anyone wanted specific tailored advice, especially on rent, they would need to get in touch before this, though she noted her workload.

### **Welfare and Rights Officer-**

She noted that she had done a number of student facing things, including complimentary student support posters that can be picked up from reception. She was working on the sexual health scheme report which was submitted.

Along with that she has been writing about welfare issues in the Student press. As well as this, she had circulated surveys, on supporting mature and PG students. She had also trained a number of officers on general welfare skills. She had made the welfare hand book more intersectional. She had done a couple of art and mental health workshops. As well as the rainbow cards for the LGBT students as they are more likely to be estranged. She had done additional sessions on self care 101, as well as Mental Health as a disability.

She announced that she is interested in making the Self care 101 workshop available for college JCR/MCRs to use. If any college wanted her to conduct the sessions, they should get in touch with her.

The President thanked the WARO, and noted that something she forgot to mention was her work on students with families. She noted that we have information on 19/31 college students. She stressed the importance of improving the welfare provisions for students with families and not isolating them from the college. She notes that all the partners of members can come to events organized by the GU as well as things aimed at families in general, such as the parent and toddler group. The president reminded the council that student partners are in fact nonvoting members of the GU. We will be looking for feedback in this area.



### **5a Postgraduate Feedback and Reporting Project**

It was noted that this was discussed above, though a student was interested in the tutoring support aspect of this. The chair allowed this, as it was seen as relevant to our members.

In reply to “how many are you happy with the tutoring?” 7 members said yes, 3 felt there was room for improvement

In reply to “What GT system do you have?” it was generally around one or two Graduate tutors per college as opposed to several undergraduate tutors. The council saw it as an obviously inadequate support for the Graduate students. It was noted in mature/ PG only colleges the tutorial provisions and support was a lot more integrated. There seemed to be significant variation between Colleges, but most did not have an integrated system.

In reply to “What do you expect of them?”The GT are expected to support students, especially those who are having a hard time or struggling, these should be supporting the student. Members noted a number of good practices to encourage a building up of a personal relationship with GT (which was normally lacking) and to avoid students falling through the cracks. The president sought to collect a number of examples of good practice and how they could be more widely circulated.

Council felt that good practice should be circulated, as it was not always clear what they should expect. The Chair agreed to discuss this at the next meeting.

### **5c Budget/ Accounts**

Council was supplied with the previous year’s accounts and the budget for the next academic year. It was noted that the Union was seeking to wind down its reserves, after creating a surplus before 2016, mainly due to lack of Sabbatical representation.

Council was content with the budget at this point.

### **5d Recruitment, or external trustee, appointment process.**

It was noted that as usual, student trustee would be recruited in the near future. On top of this, the term of our three external trustees is coming to an end in June 2018. The executive committee would be putting forward possible trustee for Council to appoint (or to refuse to appoint) in Easter term, if not sooner.



## 6a Safety Provision for Access Routes to Eddington

The following motion was put to Council:

*Resolved:*

*That the Graduate Union advocate for the immediate prioritization of adequate lighting for foot and cycle paths between Cambridge and the Eddington site.*

Introduced by Tess Skyrme of Girton College

She noted that motions regards a path on the new development at Eddington, near the new Sainsbury. A Cycle path, has been open which links two finished sites, between the unfinished site. Inadequate lighting is provided by solar stud- runway.

She felt that overall it is not safe, with a number of near misses for cyclist, pedestrians. The site is being paid for by the university. She noted that reports of crime in the area is also a concern. The issue seems to be that the construction company are the ones that need to improve the lighting, and the University will need to push them to do this.

In reply to a question, she noted that she is looking for better lighting, even on a temporary basis be installed immediately.

The motion was passed unanimously.

## 6b. Adequate Instruction on Supervising Disabled Students

The following motion will be put to Council:

*Resolved:*

*In recognition that Student Support Documents (SSDs) are rarely, if ever, distributed to graduate students who supervise, that the GU campaign for the proper distribution of SSDs, or instruction of reasonable adjustment requirements to graduate student supervisors at the University.*

The Vice-President saw this as her leaving gift. She notes that she has worked with 60-70 students during her time here with a disability statement. She noted that no-one had told her how to support these students, or that they need reasonable adjustments in advance. It was felt therefore that that support was more of a tick boxing attitude. Though it was noted there are a number of pockets of good practice.



It was noted that supervision is more of a partnership, which the students should be inputting at much as the supervisor. If a student has a SSD, but it is not being implemented, this is letting the student down.

A member noted that they have an SSD, and felt that part of the second half should be changed. They noted that they may not want a supervisor who is also a students to see their personal information. The Vice-President agree to revise the wording, with more emphasis so that the SSD holder has more agency, with a Greater degree of accountability on a course manager/ dep admin.

This was amended to:

*In recognition that Student Support Documents SSDs are rarely, if ever, distributed to Graduate Students who supervise, that the GU campaign for Departments to properly prepare Graduate Student supervisors at the University, if reasonable adjustments are required by a supervisee.*

This was passed unanimously.

## **7. Council Business**

Non was submitted

## **8. Emergency motion**

The President noted that the trustee board were seeking Councils support to have the Vice-President Elect enter her role. It was noted that the proposal would only this until March; under the understanding the VP will be able work full time after this. Further they recognised the need to support our students, when coming in to office.

It was noted under the regulation they can work 10 hours a week, though it is hoped that a shortfall in time can be supplemented by extra support. It was further noted that this was seen as the best way, as if we went for an election, this post could not be filled for some time due to the holidays. It was noted by a member, that filling the post part-time seemed reasonable, but with proper support.

The Vice-President felt that the incoming officer would struggle to do the bare minimum in 10 hours. A member asked about the practicalities of another election. It was noted that it would need to take place after 24 days after being called, though it would need Council's permission first.

A member asked how we ensure she is able to take up the post full time. It was felt that we may have to move to a by-election if that was the case.

The Vice-President noted that the election route would possibly lead to staff member taking up the slack that did not involve representation. In reply member felt that we



should allow the VP elect to enter the role part-time, with support, but should look to organising an election with an appropriate amount of time before the part time period ends in march.

Council agreed to the Boards proposal. The council also announced an election in the Lent term under the auspices of the President as returning officer. The Council would wish for any sabbatical vacancies to be filled in this election.

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