Minutes of a Meeting of the Student Council

Held at 7pm on 04 September 2017, in the CUSU/GU Lounge at 17 Mill Lane

Voting members of Council present:
Representing the Affiliated Combination Rooms:
- Hugo Larose (Gonville and Cauis)
- Gabrielle McHarg (Fitzwilliam)
- Conrad Watt (St Catharine’s)
- Reece Oosterbeek (Trinity College BA Society)
- Jenni Caisley (Peterhouse MCR)
- Jesse Allardice (St John’s College - Samuel Butler Room)
- Taylor Saunders-Wood (Jesus College MCR)

Representing Cambridge University Students’ Union (CUSU):
- Daisy Eyre (CUSU President)

Voting members of Council present by proxy:
Representing the Affiliated Common Rooms:
- Tess Skyrme (Girton MCR)
- Chad Allen (King’s MCR)
- Mark Driver (Robinson MCR)

Non-voting members of Council present:
- Darshana Joshi (President)
- Ellie Chan (Vice-President & Chair)

Other GU Members in attendance:
- Luis Nobre (Darwin College Student Association)
- Quentin Peter (Queens’ College MCR)

Also in attendance: Ali Chahine (GU Manager – acting as Secretary)
The Council appointed the Vice-President to Chair the meeting.

Apologies:
- Micha Frazer-Carroll (CUSU/GU Welfare & Rights Officer)

The Council confirmed that the proxies of voting members of the Council count towards quorum. There were 10 affiliated Combination Rooms (or their proxies) present, so the meeting was quorate.

Meeting opened at 19.05

1. Approval of the minutes of the previous Council meeting

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 12 June 2017 were approved.

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

No matters

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

The President welcomed Ali Chahine, who had taken up the post as General Manager on 21st August. She advised that Council would be presented with the annual MCR affiliation fees paper at the following council meeting, and that as the college levy would likely come in 2018/2019, that this would be the final year such a paper would be charged.

The President had been talking with the Careers service on allowing postgraduate and graduate students to do an internship of 10 hours per week, which had previously been limited to academic work. She noted that the biggest hurdle in getting this to be recognised lay with supervisors of postgraduate and graduate students; this would be a big change and the President invited feedback.

She further noted that we are looking to appoint, or re-appoint our external trustees for July 2018.

The President also announced her intention to make good on her manifesto promise to foreground the issue of postgraduate mental health. At the moment the majority of policies are based on undergraduates; the President intends to use her term of office to encourage the University and Colleges to implement something to better suit postgraduate and graduate students.

The Vice-President continued to work on the training for supervisors of postgraduate and graduate students, and invited input from Council Members on this issue. She observed that the Board of Graduate Studies had continued to be helpful and were still receptive to the idea of making this compulsory, but that it was likely that the project would continue beyond the end of her term of office.

She thanked the Gates Scholars for their excellent work on the Alternative Postgraduate Prospectus, and noted that it would soon be ready to be shared.

The Vice-President’s term comes to an end on the 31 December, and asked council to publicise the position and encourage members to stand.
It was further noted that if a MCR/ Joint Combination room is a registered charity, there is a need to make sure that you comply with the data protection act that comes in to place in May 2018. The Graduate Union offered to provide some guidance for those affected MCRs.

She hoped that everyone noted the new logo on the agendas, noting that branding projects was coming to fruition. This was noted with approval by council.

4. Motions to be ratified

There were none.

5. Council discussions and questions to Council

a) Training for Supervisors of Graduates

The Vice-President invited the Council to offer their opinions on whether their supervisors were adequately trained or informed. In response to a question from a Member, the Vice-President stated that though training is available, it is not compulsory, so is not seen as being effective. The Board of Graduate Studies does not want to keep a list of those capable of postgraduate research supervision. The upper eschelons of the University want parity of service, but saw Departments as ultimately responsible for managing situations where the relationship had deteriorated.

A Member noted that they lacked a formal contract. It was noted the University has a Code of Conduct for Research students, but Members felt that supervisors do not like it when it is pushed.

The Vice-President asked whether a more formal contract should be agreed. A Member noted that that they were not encouraged to take holidays and this could lead to stress. The President noted that it would need to accommodate international students, as due to the Tier 4 visa regime, could lead to students being forced to leave the country. For example if they needed to intermit if they would not be in study for 3 weeks or more.

A member noted that students and supervisors do not know the structure of their course. Supervisors can be surprised when deadlines for paperwork approach, and in turn students have to do the paper work or task last minute.

The President also noted that the University are considering to move to 4 year degrees, despite the standard PhD funding being limited to three years.

The CUSU President saw this as work that the Unions could work together on.

6. Ordinary motions

Election schedule

The following motion was put to council:

Graduate Union Electoral Scheme for the GU Michaelmas Elections 2016 (C.170904.B).

Resolved:

1. 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.

2. that an Election Committee to oversee this election be convened, comprising of the CUSU elections committee.

Submitted by the Vice-President

CUSU president added that the CUSU committee consist of herself presently, and that the committee proper would be chosen at the first CUSU council of the year. GU members are also members of CUSU, so they would be able to stand for the committee, though not necessarily have a vote. She would seek to circulate the dates in due course.

A vote was taken: 13 votes in favour; none against. The motion passes.

7. Emergency motions

There were none.

8. Elections by Council

9. Dates of upcoming meetings

The dates of upcoming meetings of GU Council have been approved, with the chair asked are as follows:

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
Returning Officer report for the GU by-elections (2017)
This was approved, 13 votes in favour.

The next meeting would take place on the 16th October

The CUSU President reminded members of Unions’ activity during Fresher’s Week – there is a
CUSU/GU rota of visits going around the colleges, though at present most contact has been
through social media and no official emails have been sent out.

There has also been an attempt at organising a meeting or gathering with the new Vice-Chancellor
and student leaders (Union/Combination room officers) and faculty reps. They would like him to
present his vision of the University. It was hoped this would be an early chance for him to get to know
and engage with students. It was noted at his current University (British Columbia), he performed a
duet with the Student Union President there, which offered the chance for more unconventional
student engagement.

Meeting closed at 19.45