Agenda of a Meeting of the Graduate Union Council

To be held at 7pm on Monday 3 December, in the GU Lounge at 17 Mill Lane

Contents

1. Agenda - C.031218.A 2-3
2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting - C.031218.B 4-13
3. Report from President - C.031218.C 14-15
   Report/Paper on Graduate Rights Campaign - C.031218.D 20-24
5. Amended Motions - C.031218.B 9-13
6. Prevent Motion - C.031218.E 25
7. President contract (c.031218. F) 26-30
8. GU – CUSU – UCU Joint Project:
   ‘Fair Allocation of Teaching Hours’- (c.031218. G) 31
Agenda of a Meeting of the Graduate Union Council
To be held at 7pm on Monday 3 December, in the GU Lounge at 17 Mill Lane

Note emergency motions will be accepted up to the point the meeting is called to order by emailing vice-president@gradunion.cam.ac.uk

Agenda (Council) (c.031218. A)

1. Approval of the minutes of the previous Council meeting (c.031218 .B)
The unconfirmed minutes of the last Council meeting, held on 15 October 2018, are circulated for approval.

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

3. Reports from Sabbatical Officers and Officers of the Executive Committee
   A. President’s report (c.031218. C)
   B. Vice-President’s report (c.031218..D)
   C. Welfare and Rights’ report (verbal)

4. Motions to council

Approve amended motions from the last meeting (see (c.031218. B)
   i. Memorandum of Understanding between CUCU, CUSU and CUGU
   ii. Brexit Working Group Motion
   iii. Campaigning Fund
   iv. Campaigns Committee Motion

   b) Prevent motion: (c.031218. E)
The CUGU resolves:
  a. To oppose the implementation of the Prevent Duty through the following measures.
  b. To discuss Prevent Duty implications at college level with MCRs.
  c. To work to reform the University’s Prevent training.
  d. Not to implement the Prevent Duty in our capacity as a students’ union.
  e. To work to ensure as few students as possible are affected by Prevent.

- Open letter signed by GU Executive Committee: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1nomsortgTDKS8NGwRvtOF7IIQASqcpqNg-tK34Z4MJA/edit

c) President contract (c.031218. F)

d) Widening participation strategy (verbal report)

5. GU – CUSU – UCU joint project – ‘fair allocation of teaching hours’ (c.031218. G)

6. Returning officer’s report MT Elections (verbal report)

7. Campaigns committee election Candidates for election as the Council representative are asked to either submit their nomination at the beginning of the agenda item, or if unable to attend, to submit their nomination before the start of the meeting

8. Emergency motions
The Council will consider any emergency motions submitted between the circulation of the Agenda and the start of the meeting.

9. Dates of upcoming meetings
Lent Term: (15 Jan to 15 March)
  • 21 January 2019
  • 11 March 2019
Easter Term (23 April to 14 June)
  • 29 April 2019
  • 03 June 2019
Long Vacation
  • 08 July 2019
  • 02 September 2019
All at 7pm in the GU Lounge

11. Any other business Training sessions run during the Easter term 2018
Welcome
The Chair welcomed members to the meeting

1. Minutes
Council received the minutes of the September meeting.

Minutes were accepted

2. Matters arising
The widening participation update will be pushed back the December meeting
3. Reports from the Sabbatical Officers

Council received written reports from the Officers on their activities since the last meeting.

President

The President presented a written report

A member asked how efficient it was to attend so many meetings, whether they were a waste of her time. In reply, the President noted that most are rather helpful, and it is important to have PG in the room, as a lot of business ends up focusing on the UG, though some are not useful, 99% are helpful.

Vice-President

The Vice President presented a written report

She introduced her campaign and was looking into the CoP and Statutes and Ordinances to understand the responsibilities and duties of PhD supervisor. She noted that GU had a great engagement during Freshers’ week and thanked the executive committee and MCRs for their work and support. She urged MCRs to promote the elections, especially the position of the Vice-President.

Welfare and Rights Officer - presented a written report

She was concentrating on training; she will be working with Sexual Assault Harassment Advisor on sexual assault welfare support. She would also be working with BME staff support network to report harassment – joint event with UCU.

- The Chair was handed over to Nikita Hari

Motion A

MoU between GU, CUSU, and UCU

The President introduced to the motion, who noted that the motion came about as part of a joint discussion that was established after the strikes, with the aim to limit disruption to our members while working together in joint areas, especially Graduate Student Worker rights.

In reply to a Question on whether there is a conflict of workers vs. learners, the President felt that this would lead to a commitment to communicate more – noting the best thing we can do is communicate effectively and frequently with each other.

In reply to a Question on what the advantage of is formalising the existing relationship, the President noted that it increased transparency, and led to a discussion with the councils, as opposed to the just the Sabbatical Officers.

In reply to a Question on whether it gives the GU a weaker negotiation position, ex: would GU be expected to support a strike? The President felt that
this would strengthen GU’s position especially in areas that matter to our own members, such as fair pay. She noted that though it does say “through joint solidarity” That it would be for GU council to decide what that means in situations.

It was suggested that this should be removed, though, on the other hand, it does encourage UCU to support student strikes. Overall it is not about supporting UCU, but making sure UCU supports graduate issues –

An amendment was accepted by the proposer: to add to “through demonstrations of solidarity and joint campaigning activity” with “to be determined by respective councils”

The Amended Motion passed. The motion passed, but it was noted that the motion would only become policy if confirmed at the next Council due to it being edited in the meeting.

Motion B

Brexit Working Group

It was noted that there were over 2000 grad students from EU at Cambridge, the EU also provides the University with over £600m of funding per annum. It was further noted that many students did not feel they were getting enough information from the University about how leaving the EU would affect them. The motion would establish a working group to inform students and encourage the University to communicate more effectively in areas of student concern.

It was observed by a member that the focus was on European students only, when, for example, it would affect Jamaicans/other International student access to European universities via Erasmus+

An amendment was proposed, and after some discussion, the proposer accepted the following working: “all members affected “instead of “EU students”. As well as Wording – under GU council note, 3. Leaving the EU will significantly affect all members.

The motion passed, but it was noted that the motion would only become policy if confirmed at the next Council due to it being edited in the meeting.

Motion C

Part A

Campaigning Fund

The President introduced the last motion with 3 sub motions. She noted that the executive does not have a campaigning budget. But it was also noted that such funding should not be restricted. It was hoped that savings of around £3000 could be allocated on issues to affect things on postgraduates.
The idea would be to trial this for a year. It was noted that the criteria for the fund would be proposed to the council by the proposed committee.

The money would still need to go through the Union’s financial procedures, as previously noted a budget would have to be authorised in advance. The General Manager would process any purchases, and the president or another trustee would have to authorise the expenditure before that. It was noted that the President can do this already, but it would bring a degree of transparency if the campaigns came through the council. It was noted that overall the Trustee Board would keep an overview of expenditure.

Examples were given of where and how the funds could be used. A good example could be the hidden college and department fees or the lighting at Girton to Eddington Cycle path. It could be posters to get the University to fix it. Though in reply to some concerns, it was noted that this was only an example.

It was noted that the decision-making time and the amount awarded would be developed by the proposed committee and presented to the council.

**An amendment was accepted by the proposer to allow all members to apply (including associate members)**

It was noted that a guide was needed on what works, what is best practice, and what they do elsewhere. It was suggested that this is work that the committee should do.

The motion passed, but it was noted that the motion would only become policy if confirmed at the next Council due to it being edited in the meeting.

**Part B**

**Project Funding Motion**

The President introduced the motion. She noted that there was an opportunity for Grads being paid for creative campaign work. Examples such as a creative project around imposter syndrome. It was noted that the amount would be in a competition, so the student would not be paid for their time, but would be the equivalent of £20ph, as it would be expecting around 50 hrs of work.

A member was concerned that it would be difficult to measure or manage the quality and suggested that perhaps a checkpoint should be included, possibly a contract of deliverables. They suggested that this was something the campaign’s committee could do.

Another member felt that there was a need for a formal way of managing, perhaps using an established framework

Suggested amendments included

- Removing the set amount
- Drop the hourly rate to remove the employment aspect of it
• Have it open to all GU members
One member felt that there would need to be a lot of things that needed to work out before this motion could be voted on. It was noted that it would need to make sure that any suggestions were compliant with the regulations.

The chair asked whether they would want to defer this motion to the December meeting, - **Unanimously deferred**

**Part C**

**Campaigns, committee**

The Part was introduced by the President

It was noted that a guide was needed on what works, what is best practice, and what they do elsewhere. It was suggested that this is work that the committee should do.

**An amendment was accepted by the proposer** that a space for a Mental Health Working Group member be replaced with “members to be co-opted by the committee as appropriate”

A discussion was had about how to holding funding to account, as though the Trustee Board could do this, the type of campaign. It was decided that the committee would submit a termly report, and would include who was a member, the amount of expenditure, and upcoming campaigns. It was noted that if the committee was to get confirmation first, then there would be no point in having it.

There was a discussion of Conflict of Interest. It was noted that it is usually at the GU and the University for These to be declared, and the GU already had guidelines.

The motion passed,

but it was noted that the motion would only become policy if confirmed at the next Council due to it being edited in the meeting.

**Date of the next meeting.**
The next meeting will take place on the 03 December 2018, at 7 pm in the GU Lounge at 17 Mill Lane

**Any Other Business.** AC noted that through the VP he will be circulating information about the 3-minute thesis competition and training for MCR officers.
C.181015.C Memorandum of Understanding between CUCU, CUSU and CUGU

This Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) establishes the terms and understanding between Cambridge UCU (CUCU), Cambridge University Students’ Union (CUSU) and the Cambridge University Graduate Union (CUGU) in relation to shared working.

Background
Following the recent industrial action over staff pensions in spring 2018, there has been renewed and increased collaboration between CUCU, CUSU, and CUGU. The three unions have found these collaborations to be beneficial. This MoU intends to formalise these collaborations to ensure their longevity.

Purpose
This MoU establishes a commitment to a partnership on strategic issues and in areas of common interest. The unions’ interests are aligned: staff working conditions are the conditions in which students learn. They also represent the current and future working conditions of many students: postgraduate students, in particular, are often both staff and students. A university education is a collaborative relationship between staff and students and each benefit from the advancement of the other’s interest. The purpose of this MoU is to encourage unions with shared interests and memberships in Cambridge to cooperate in order to benefit each other in terms of visibility and engagement.

These goals will be accomplished through the following commitments:

Commitment from CUCU: to proactively contact the students’ unions when policy developments may impact on student teaching or postgraduate student employment, to allow for preparation. To support students’ rights to fair learning and working conditions, fair pay for student workers and equal treatment through demonstrations of solidarity and joint campaigning activity. To maintain an ongoing dialogue. To discuss areas of shared work.

Commitment from CUSU and CUGU: to proactively contact CUCU when policy developments impact on campaigning plans, to allow for preparation. To support the right to fair pay, fair pensions and fair treatment for all staff, through demonstrations of solidarity and joint campaigning activity as determined by the respective Councils. To maintain an ongoing dialogue. To discuss areas of shared work.

CUCU, CUSU and CUGU representatives will meet termly and share information about plans and strategy related to relevant issues.

Reporting
CUSU and CUGU representatives will report annually to their respective councils, and CUCU representatives will report to their AGM.

Duration
This MoU shall become effective upon signature by the authorised representatives from CUCU, CUSU and CUGU and will remain in effect until modified by mutual consent or terminated by any one of the partners. This MoU does not represent a commitment of funds and may be modified by mutual consent of authorised representatives from CUCU, CUSU and CUGU.

Date and signed by:
CUCU, CUGU, CUSU.
C.181015.D Brexit Working Group Motion

Background notes:

- In the financial year ending July 2017, the University of Cambridge received £59.2m of research funding from the European Commission.
- The University received another £10.7m in other costs.
- 12.7% of overall University external research income comes from the EU.
- Nearly 30% of funding in the School of Arts and Humanities comes from the EU – this School has the highest direct dependency.
- In the academic year 2017/18, there were 2379 EU postgraduate students, comprising 23.4% of the postgraduate population, in comparison with 1414 undergraduates, comprising 11.4% of the undergraduate population.
- There were also a number of British and International students who rely on EU funding for programmes.
- The Vice-Chancellor’s report, ‘My Cambridge’ highlights the need for discussion of the impact of Brexit, evidenced by the following extracts:
  - ‘A large number expressed concern at the impact of Brexit on the University’s global relevance’ (p.12)
  - ‘Some thought the University had a role to play in the Brexit debate and should stress the hazards of Brexit and its unintended consequences for the HE sector and beyond.’ (p.12)
  - ‘There were warnings about the risk of losing our relationship with European partners post- Brexit and calls for an increase in European collaboration.’ (p.12)
  - ‘Some cited Brexit and the looming diminution of EU research funding as an additional incentive to diversify and expand sources of income’ (p.18)

GU Council Working Group Motion

GU Council notes:

1. That the University receives significant income from EU resources.
2. That leaving the European Union will impact significantly on the University.
3. That leaving the European Union will significantly impact all students, especially students from the EU and from associated areas such as Norway and Switzerland.

GU Council believes:

4. That a GU-run Brexit Working Group will allow for dissemination of information to Members relating to Brexit.
5. That a Brexit Working Group will allow for student communication with the University’s EU Strategy Group through the GU President’s membership.
6. That a Brexit Working Group should run events, which will allow for discussion with EU students, and support of EU students affected members

GU Council resolves:

7. To support the creation of GU-run Brexit Working Group, to exist until October 2021, unless the term is extended by GU Council.
8. That the Brexit Working Group will be open to all members of the GU.
9. That the Brexit Working Group will report to the Executive Committee and GU Council.
C.181015.E Campaigning Fund

Proposal: Campaigning Fund
To create a campaigning pot of £3000, to be used by members of the GU Executive Committee and voting members of GU Council for campaigning work in collaboration with the GU on issues that affect postgraduate students.

This campaigning fund will aim to increase the capacity of GU Executive Officers to engage in campaigning work across the University. Executive Officers currently have no access to formal budgets or funds. The fund will aim to improve communication and engagement between GU Council members and the GU, allowing for Council members to use this fund and to work with sabbatical and executive officers to effect change at a college or University level. This fund will also aim to improve the visibility of the GU through increased campaigning work. This fund is proposed to be trialed for a year.

Campaigning Fund Motion

GU Council notes:
1. That the Graduate Union considers campaigning on issues that affect postgraduate students to be a priority area.
2. That the Graduate Union currently provides no funding for Executive Officers or campaigning support for members of the GU Council.

GU Council believes:
3. That making more funding available will improve our campaigning capacity within the University.
4. That making more funding available for campaigns will improve the visibility of the GU.
5. That making more funding available will improve communication between GU Council, the Executive Committee, the Sabbatical Officers and the student population.

GU Council resolves:
6. To approve the establishment of a Campaigning Fund to be used by members of the GU Executive Committee and voting members of the GU Council, for a trial period of a year.
C.181015.F Project Funding Motion (deferred to the next meeting)

Proposal: Project Funding Competition
We propose that the GU run a project funding competition on issues identified by the GU Mental Health Survey or the Graduate Rights campaign. Funding for multiple projects will be offered, running over Lent and Easter, and projects can address one or some of the main issues identified by the Mental Health Survey, or another campaigning area. The funding available will be £2000 and students can apply for up to £1000, or for smaller amounts for smaller projects. On the basis that postgraduate students should be properly paid for part-time work, project proposals will be costed based on the pay of £20/hour.

Projects will be encouraged to be student-facing and creative, rather than informational, and could take the form of a short film, an exhibition, a performance, a sculpture or a piece of writing. Shareable, widely disseminated content will be particularly encouraged, in order to reach as many students as possible. If the project is not inherently ‘shareable’, a proposal for wider dissemination will be requested as part of the funding proposal.

Project Funding Motion
GU Council notes:
That campaigning work often fails to reach postgraduate students in need.
That campaigning work is often event-based and not aimed at wide dissemination.

GU Council believes:
That a Project Funding competition will allow students to creatively respond to campaigning work, and issues identified through campaigning work.
That a Project Funding competition will allow for the wider dissemination of our campaigns.

GU Council resolves:
To approve the establishment of a Project Funding competition, to be open to all postgraduate students.
C.181015.G Campaigns Committee Motion

Proposal: GU Campaigns Committee
In order to administer the drawdown of the Campaigning Fund and to review applications for the Project Funding, we propose to create a Campaigns Committee comprising a GU Sabbatical Officer, a GU Trustee, an Executive Committee member, a member of the GU Mental Health Working Group, and a voting member of GU Council. We propose that members of the GU Executive Committee or voting members of GU Council will apply to the GU Campaigns Committee with a campaigning plan relating to the Campaigning Fund, and projects will be approved or denied, based on their viability.

We propose that any full member of the Graduate Union will be able to apply to the Project Funding Competition and projects will be reviewed by the Campaigns Committee.

We propose that rules relating to the Campaigning Fund and the Project Funding competition will be established by the GU Campaigns Committee and reviewed by the GU Executive Committee, the GU Board of Trustees and GU Council to ensure proper scrutiny of proposed procedures.

Campaigns Committee Motion
GU Council notes:
That the establishment of new funds requires management and scrutiny.

GU Council believes:
That a Campaigns Committee comprised of a GU Sabbatical Officer, a GU Trustee, an Executive Committee member, a member of the GU Mental Health Working Group, and a voting member of GU Council will ensure proper management and scrutiny. It will co-opt additional members when necessary

GU Council resolves:
To establish a Campaigns Committee and to co-opt willing members appropriate to the terms described above.

This Committee will report to the Executive Committee, GU Council and the Board of Trustees.

The committee will produce a report of its activities and expenditure each term to be sent to Council.
c.031218 .C : GU President: Report

Below, I outline some areas/projects I’ve been working on over the last month. Please get in touch if you have any questions, or want to contribute to any of this work: president@gradunion.cam.ac.uk.

Postgraduate mental health:

This term, I’ve run a survey on postgraduate mental health, and we’ve had 1000 respondents. I’m planning to close the survey around the end of December, and our new target is 1500 responses. I hope to share some initial findings in January, and the University may be providing staff support to allow thorough analysis of our results, which will then feed into the University’s Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

This term, I ran two events on mental health – in relation to supervisor relationships and funding and finances. Around 50 people attended each event – a mix of supervisors, graduate tutors, students, and university and college staff, including the Director of the Cambridge Trust, the Head of Graduate Student Administration and the Head of Student Funding.

Supervisor relationships:

At our first event on supervisor relationships we discussed the need for more communication: for example of the university processes that allow for changing a supervisor, on the availability of self-evaluation reports, on policies and procedures to ensure accountability, on reporting systems, and the code of practice, as well as the need for more communication between colleges and departments. We discussed the need for simplification of the process of changing supervisor and routes of formal complaint. We examined sharing: of supervisor responsibility to avoid the troubling dependence on one person, which leads to problems, and of best practice. We/the University could provide case studies and departmental best practice guides.

We also debated implementing mediation for PhD students and supervisors, mandatory, department-specific training for supervisors. We also talked about the need to pay PhD representatives in departments – to carry out surveys, attend meetings and organise events. More broadly, we talked about the need to encourage the admission of vulnerabilities, as a University and individually, the need to encourage positive feedback models (sandwich feedback etc.), and the need to understand different teaching and learning styles. We also talked about the supportive structures needed, e.g. strong PhD cohorts, and discussed how departments could survey PhD cohorts and act on feedback, complaints and demands. Finally, we acknowledged and discussed staff mental health issues, workload models which didn’t include PhD supervisors and structural problems which cause supervisor/student strain/issues.

Following our meeting, Kerri Gardiner, Head of Graduate Administration, organised a meeting for 23/11 to have a further discussion and draft an action plan on student/supervisor relationship issues – which will be attended by me, the GU VP and other stakeholders.

Funding and finances:

At our second event, on funding and finances, we discussed moving towards an extended PhD length at Cambridge – to acknowledge its real length and to help students with more funding, and support to take on other projects. We talked about reviewing the graduate application process and problems with the financial guarantee and the presentation
of/communication about the financial guarantee. We discussed communicating more effectively the acceptability/normality of intermission. We shared feelings about college inequalities and the need to tackle disparities in funding with more centralisation and transparency. We discussed different interpretations of ‘hardship’, depending on student/staff status. We talked about the problems associated with a disconnected University, peer to peer mentoring, the role of graduate tutors, and visas. We agreed that more communication and transparency were needed, across the University, in relation to funding and financial issues. We were encouraged to hear that the Student Support Initiative will be addressing college inequalities in relation to funding.

The Student Support Initiative strategy has been revised and now includes wording on smoothing disparities between colleges.

**Postgraduate widening participation:**

Postgraduate widening participation is now part of the University’s Education Strategy, forms part of the Vice Chancellor’s priority framework and is a crucial pillar of the Student Support Initiative. I represent postgraduate students on various committees developing these strategies. I am working with the Admissions Office and helping to prepare a paper on fee waivers for low-income ‘home’ students, as well as international students. I am also part of a newly formed Postgraduate Widening Participation Working Group, which is meeting for the first time this week.

**Brexit Working Group:**

The GU’s Brexit Working Group had its first two meetings, including one with the Head of the International Student Office, Anthony Dangerfield. The minutes of this second meeting may be of interest to MCRs, and have been attached as a paper to your meeting bundle. We discussed visas, welfare support, legal support, financial support, Erasmus, Horizon, fee status and residency status. See the minutes for more details and get in touch if you have any questions. We asked for MCRs to be updated about University plans relating to Brexit.

**Trustee Strategy Day:**

The GU recently held a successful strategy day with our trustees. We discussed our relationship with students, the University and CUSU. We discussed our priorities, values and mission. We talked about staff and sabbatical officer workload and discussed the postgraduate student experience at Cambridge – from application to graduation and post-graduation, in terms of expectation, reality and desired experience. We also held an internal strategy discussion, and we hope soon to organise a GU Council strategy session, where you’ll be able to feed into the development of our draft strategy.

**Meetings and Committees:**

I’ve had my regular committees and meetings outlined in my last report, including Graduate Board, University Council, Senior Tutors’ Committee, Board of Graduate Studies and Graduate Tutors’ Committee, among many others, and weekly meetings with Alice Benton, Head of Educational and Student Policy, and monthly meetings with Graham Virgo, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education and Kerri Gardiner, Head of Graduate Student Administration.
Goodbye, Farewell and Merry Christmas 🎄 from the Outgoing VP, Nikita Hari

Beginning with my tenure in Dec 2017, this reporting has been a regular feature in my communication with the GU Council. Reporting to the Council as the Vice-President/Chair of the Executive Committee (EC) has given me a unique platform from which to share my work updates and in general engage with the councillors. When I finish writing this final report, I will figuratively roll it up and pass it to the next pair of capable hands. Time and tenure aside, I believe this to be the perfect occasion for a new voice and a fresh perspective.

This one-year run has been a challenging, yet exciting path for me, and I have rich learnings to take away with me. There have been many positive outcomes and experiences, but the most rewarding times are when I receive an email from a student who felt they now had the opportunity to share their experience with their supervisor with us. When a student contacts me to praise the relevance of this campaign, in particular, praising the bold work done by the team in lobbying for accountable and responsible Ph.D. supervisions, it reminds me why we do what we do. Every one of these student feedbacks and shared experiences makes all of my work worthwhile!

Coming to the end of my term, it is my first and foremost hope that I will be remembered as the Vice-President who made ‘Postgraduate Voices and Postgraduate Rights’ crucial to everything I did.

PhD supervision issue is often buried in secrecy and denial, and my main focus in this post was to change this culture of silence surrounding this problem - which is both a personal interest of mine and crucial for Ph.D. students. My other priority this year was to specifically work on making the Graduate Union’s voice heard amongst the deafening noise in the University – In terms of communications, this year I revamped the bulletin and social media sites, making them more engaging, and more personal, which allowed me to establish trust with our membership. This led to an increased outreach and exposure for the GU – most notably during the Freshers’ week when we had reached thousands of students on social
media. This complemented well with 600+ students directly visiting GU for the events conducted by the part-time officers and the President.

My other focus has been on **restructuring the EC, devising a Code of Practise for EC and revamping the portfolios**. I introduced the submission of detailed written reports by the VP and team to council, EC meetings and to BoT meetings to ensure accountability, transparency and effective modus operandi to GU functioning.

More widely, for the university committees, policies and postgraduate body – I have worked very closely with the PVC of Education Prof. Graham Virgo, Kerri Gardner of Board of Graduate Studies (BGS), Alice Benton of Education Policy Office (EPO), Office of Scholarly Communication and University Service Providers; lobbying for inclusion of and increased support system for post-graduates. I’m very pleased with my contribution in the consultation process for E-thesis policy, Fieldwork training, PhD supervisor eligibility policy, Educational strategy, Data ethics policy, Self-Reflection & Well-being strategy.

My pet-projects and initiatives finally culminated in the launch of ‘**Graduate Rights Campaign**’. I designed and devised this campaign along with a core team comprising of interested students. The kick-off came with the GU council passing the motion supporting this campaign aimed at changing the Ph.D. supervision culture in this university. In the two days after launching, we reached thousands of students with 500+ reads on social media. More than 25 students came forward to report serious experiences via the **Anonymous Submission Service**. I collaborated with each of the university services, collectively and individually introducing them to our membership via social media and campaign media sites. This is to ensure that postgraduates are well aware of the **University Support System**. I partnered with the Students’ Unions’ Advice Service (SUAS) in designing the ‘**Conflict Navigation Flowchart**’ for the Ph.D. students with inputs from BGS and EPO.

As a knock-on effect of this awareness campaign, the university higher admins, MCRs, graduate tutors and individual students came forward to share their experiences and suggesting possible solutions to this complex problem. The campaign found that PhD supervisions at **Cambridge can be unfair, mental health is getting worse, vague legal rights afford us little to no protection, and the code of practice is ignored - all this needs to change**. Identifying these core issues, I along with Hugo and Richard wrote a paper to the Graduate tutors committee and is currently working on a more detailed report to the VC, PVC Education, BGS, EPO Service providers, Graduate tutors and Dept Heads.

My major project of the year, which I wish will be my legacy, is the ‘**Code of Practise (CoP) Review Initiative**’. CoP is a very important guiding document which is not widely known amongst both students and supervisors, and in other cases, neglected and overlooked. I along with Hugo Larose (student trustee) and Darshana Joshi (ex-President) **lobbied successfully to have a signature page included in the CoP**. It is expected that this CoP will be read and expectations set out at the start of every year and will be signed by the Ph.D. student, supervisor, and advisor. Additionally, I **have been successful in having the info about SUAS and links to service providers including SAHA (sexual harassment and advise**
officer) and field work rules included in the CoP. I have recommended making the CoP language gender neutral, revising info on working hours, conflict resolution, intermission & extension, maternity and paternity leave, data ethics, fieldwork practices, vacation and sick leave etc. Most importantly, I have worked hard to increase awareness of CoP amongst the student and academic community.

Beyond all this, my work alongside strong representation in committees by the past and present Presidents, I trust has started a top to bottom level conversation in the University in acknowledging the culture of harassment and bullying surrounding Ph.D. supervisions; and the need for proper parity of care support for Ph.D. students. During handover with the incoming team, I will emphasise the need for continuing to push this initiative and the many recommendations the report puts forward.

I was very fortunate to have had an incredible team of part-time officers who have all been highly motivated and did an amazing job in their respective offices. The women’s officer Bridget Shaffrey started PG women’s community, reading groups, ran film events, wrote articles for Varsity and got a liberation officers motion passed by the council. Her major work was on sexual assault of intimate nature and she spoke in the Regent House for disciplinary procedure review. The international officer Izagou David was quite successful in building a strong international community and backed up my social media engagements increasing GU exposure. He also worked very closely with the International student office and Careers service in running specific events for internationals. Our BME officer Caroline James actively campaigned for BME representation in the VC’s consultation and submitted a BME strategy proposal to the University. The LGBTQ+ officer was incredibly successful in forming a strong community for PG’s and established our engagement with the Faculty of Education. The academic officer Mansoor was key in our representation on the PG feedback and reporting committees. The environmental officer Andrea Reyes worked on forming a Green officer community and supported green campaigns in the university. The mature undergrad officer Marios is newly co-opted and is working on building a connected community of mature undergrads and is keen on addressing policy issues affecting them. The welfare officer Mrittunjoy is also the VP elect; he initiated the GU welfare hour, welfare document project and ran various welfare events on autism, inclusivity, and collaborated with many societies.

If you are interested in following in our footsteps, please keep an eye out for elections call in Oct 2019 or reach out to manager@gradunion.cam.ac.uk.

Finally, I would like to most warmly thank the GU office team, GU sabbs past and present, the council, the part-time officers, CUSU team & SUAS team for all your valuable help and support. Special thanks to our designer Laurel Hemmings for bringing my ideas into life through her wonderful creativity and art! Many thanks to our reception team especially Sarah Garwood for being very helpful and for making me feel at home with her kindness! My sincere gratitude to my campaign team members Hugo Larose and Richard Dent without whom I would have not been able to run this initiative so effectively and engagingly.

I would like to extend my big thank you to the council- past and present, for your continued engagement and support till the end.
I owe it to the courageous voices of many students whose stories inspired and shaped the structure and direction of my campaign and my work in general – a massive thank you to all of you!

Reflecting back, I’m happy to have fulfilled much of my manifesto goals - it has been an incredible experience serving the GU!

I wish the incoming VP Mrittunjoy and his amazing team well as they take over from Jan 2019.

Festive regards and best wishes,

Nikita Hari, Vice President 2018
Time for Meaningful Postgraduate Student Rights at University of Cambridge in 2018

(Nikita Hari, Hugo Larose & Richard Dent)

In the two days after launching our graduate rights campaign the Graduate Union reached thousands of students with 500+ clicks on social media. More than 25 students came forward to report serious experiences via our anonymous submission service. These complaints covered the length and breadth of PhD supervision issues from harassment, departmental irresponsibility, to misconduct of viva. We have found that PhD supervision at Cambridge can be unfair, mental health is getting worse, vague legal rights afford us little to no protection, and the code of practice is mostly ignored, all these needs to change. The Guardian recently reported on endemic bullying at leading universities, Oxford topped the list in terms of complaints, a spokesperson said the university strongly condemned bullying and had a network of 300 harassment advisers to deal with this issue. Cambridge University needs to acknowledge that the ‘PhD supervisor issue’ is a global problem and deal with it transparently. It is high time to join the club of reputed Universities and funding bodies who are taking very stringent measures to end the existing ‘toxic PhD supervision culture’.

Unclear legal commitments for PhD student supervision

The legal standing for graduate students at Cambridge is unclear. The university’s statutes and ordinances do not lay down any responsibility to graduate supervisors except for submitting termly reports. This is the only legally binding duty to students they have. Whilst most supervisors engage directly with their students if you don’t get adequate supervision or support, students have no easy way to navigate this. Both students and academic staff are also unclear about the role of the graduate Code of Practise. Many do not know it exists, do not know their rights or obligations and the role the code plays from a legal perspective is also not fully understood.

"I think deciding to do a PhD here was a mistake. [...] [My supervisor] has more than 20 people in the lab doing numerous independent project works. [They don’t] conduct group meetings and doesn’t encourage post-docs to supervise or even help PhDs. Everyone is left on their own with little or no supervision. I have only met [them] formally twice in two years. [They are] not interested in meetings, [they] just want to see some output magically. [...] The Camsis reports seem namesake and my supervisor does not fill them anyway."

"My supervisor has academic difficulties [...] The supervision makes one feel a waste of time, and be a tool to realize the supervisor's research dreams. One cannot receive any recognition and encouragement from [them], and this depresses one very much. [Their behaviour is] abusive and [they blame] students for [their] own faults. [They] only [care] about [themselves], publications, and never cares about the students' future and potentials."
Serious reports coming into the Graduate Union

The submissions we’ve read tell a story of departments turning a blind eye to supervisors who focus on their best students or students linked to their research projects - particularly if said supervisor is a senior academic or has a track-record of obtaining grants and publishing in good journals. It isn’t always the fault of the supervisor; some departments refuse to provide adequate support like co-supervision and often fail supervisors and department advisors by overloading them with work.

Making the Cambridge PhD a positive experience for all students

Whilst many PhD students at Cambridge have a rewarding experience, too many are forced to battle with having to navigate departmental neglect, isolation and even bullying or harassment in a system that seems to cover a supervisor’s wrongdoings whilst neglecting the student. The current grievances process allows students to bring forward problems either through an informal process or formal process. However, our research into these processes show a consistent bias against graduate students in favour of departments and supervisors.

University statutes offer more protection to supervisors and departments

By comparison, the statues offer far greater protection for Cambridge staff whilst placing several code of practices for student conduct. There is a guidance document called the graduate code of practice (Available here) which goes into more details about supervisor and the department responsibilities. This suggests an informal complaint procedure (local resolution) but, again, this is not followed by all departments or by colleges and it does not hold the supervisor accountable for their actions. The conflict resolution procedure is not clear, it clearly discounts for overlapping power dynamics in the department. We can imagine several conflicts of interest, for example if a supervisor serves on the department’s degree committee or works on a research project with the department’s graduate studies etc. Unless there is a breach of the Equal Opportunities Act, they cannot be held accountable for wrongdoings.

The complaints procedure needs updating

Formal complaints are required to be made within 28 days, however the graduate code of
practice suggests that students first pursue an informal resolution first starting with the supervisor, department advisor, head of graduate program, college and then the board of graduate studies. This will almost certainly take longer than 28 days.

The complaint procedure will accept complaints beyond the 28-day deadline, but a strong justification must be given. This time limit should be abolished as it is discouraging students to come forward. Informal resolution procedure for complaints and serious grievances give supervisors and departments an advantage as they have no obligation to resolve problems.

Graduate student employee rights: open to abuse
The situation is no better for graduate students employed by the university. Though they receive a salary-like stipend, none have traditional rights afforded employees (paid holidays, paid sick leave or paid parental leave, working hours etc). In most of Continental Europe, PhD students are treated like employees, and are contracted by their host Universities. Though we are not asking to be treated as employees, the University has a responsibility to strengthen the rights of the PhD students, make them clearer and enforce them strictly.

Increasing disability disclosures and mental health issues but no core support
This comes at a time when mental health problems are getting much worse; when students need reassurance, protection and an easy-to-navigate grievance process. Of late, many surveys worldwide have reported that more than 50% of PhD students have mental health problems, from chronic anxiety to clinical depression – culminating with research in *Nature Biotechnology* (Evans et al., 2018) that made such noise that *Nature* went on to published an editorial “Time to talk about graduate mental health”.

Both the graduate code of practice and the statutes of the university states no responsibility for supervisors to account for disability (whether it is physical or mental health) aside from discrimination, which is very difficult to prove. This means there is absolutely no formal obligation for the supervisors to treat its students well.

Graduate Rights Campaign: Call to Action

The GU campaign for Postgraduate Rights aims to address these systemic issues by pushing the university to change the toxic Ph.D. supervision culture by enforcing accountable and responsible PhD supervisions. Our campaign focuses on three parallel approaches which are tailored based on student experiences and feedback from our membership:

1. **Change the inadequate and unfair guidelines and research practises:** We are working with the Senior PVC for Education Prof. Virgo, the Board of Graduate Studies and the Education policy office in reviewing CoP guidelines (examples include minimum mandatory leave, cleared guidelines on working hours, clear routes for conflict resolution, support for disabled students, faster intermission & extension procedures, maternity and paternity leave, data ethics, fieldwork practices, co-supervision where necessary, etc.).

   The CoP will have a signature page starting with the Oct 2018 Ph.D. batch. It is expected that this CoP will be read and expectations set out at the start of every year and will be signed by the Ph.D. student, supervisor, and advisor. The University has been relatively supportive on
this regard, with Senior PVC Prof Virgo saying “It is vital that all postgraduate students are treated with respect and are encouraged and supported to ensure that their research experience at Cambridge is the best it can possibly be.”

2. Streamline convoluted complaints procedures: We have developed a flowchart for conflict navigation in collaboration with SUAS and university service providers with links to the appropriate service providers. We have identified loop-holes in the conflict navigation especially when conflict of interest is involved, and this has been communicated to the higher admins. We hope this chart will serve as an advice to both help students navigate issues and signpost them to where they can get the most effective help when in need.

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Note: You can contact the International Student Office if you are an international student & navigating your issue changes your visa status (ex: If you have to interrupt your studies)
3. **Increase information sharing:** Most of the time, students are bombarded with overwhelming information and crucial points get lost in the noise in the complex collegiate structure. Our campaign will focus on dissemination of information about the CoP and the main service providers (examples include SUAS- Students' Unions' Advice Service; UCS- University Counselling Service; OSCCA- Officer of Student Conduct, Complaints and Appeals, DRC-Disability Resource Centre etc).

As a start, we hope these steps will be a bridge to ensure good working practices, accountability from supervisors and the departments in ensuring a fair and healthy working environment for Ph.D. students; ultimately leading to happier and more productive Ph.D. students, which can only benefit everyone!

**NB:** Quotes were amended to ensure they are completely anonymous; the meaning has not been changed.

References:
c.031218: E. Students not Suspects, proposed motion on Prevent

The CUGU notes:

a. That the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 places a statutory requirement on public bodies, including universities, to implement the Prevent Duty, which is intended to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.

b. That according to 2016 government statistics, Muslims had an approximate 1 in 500 chance of being referred to Prevent - around forty times more likely than someone who is not Muslim.¹

c. That, according to an NUS survey, 1 in 3 Muslim students are living in fear of Islamophobic attacks or abuse on campus, and that a third of Muslim respondents felt specifically negatively affected by Prevent.²

d. That the Office for Students is requiring data on welfare support for students to use in their annual Prevent report - embedding Prevent in University welfare services.

The CUGU believes:

a. That the Prevent Duty unfairly targets Muslim and BME students.

b. That the Prevent Duty results in increased scrutiny, surveillance and suspicion of Muslim and BME students in Cambridge, according to CUSU feedback.

c. That the Prevent Duty undermines the University’s commitments to free expression, accessibility and openness.

The CUGU resolves:

f. To oppose the implementation of the Prevent Duty through the following measures.

g. To discuss Prevent Duty implications at college level with MCRs.

h. To work to reform the University’s Prevent training.

i. Not to implement the Prevent Duty in our capacity as a students’ union.

j. To work to ensure as few students as possible are affected by Prevent.

k. c.031218 : F : President Contract

1 MAY 2019

PRESIDENT ELECT

ADDRESS

Dear,

Contract of Employment for Graduate Union President 2019-2020

I am pleased to confirm that you have been duly elected to the office of President of the Graduate Union (“GU”). Under the Terms of the GU Constitution, the President is employed by the Board of Trustees of the GU. On behalf of the Board of Trustees of the GU, I set out below the Terms and Conditions of your employment, as required by Section 1 of the Employment Rights Act 1996. Please countersign the duplicate copy of this letter and return it to me to confirm your acceptance of its contents.

1 Commencement Date and Period of Employment

Due to the rotational nature of election to the office of President, this contract of employment is for a fixed term commencing on 1 July 2019. It will terminate (without the need for either party to give notice of termination at the end of the fixed term) on 15 July 2020.

The circumstances in which either party may terminate this contract of employment sooner than the expiry of the stated fixed term are as set out in paragraph 16 below.

In the event that you are re-elected to serve a second term of office as President, there will be a new contract of employment issued at that time in respect of the further new fixed term. In the event of re-election, there is no deemed period of continuous service.

2 Office of President

The office of President is governed by the GU’s Constitution and Schedules; GU internal policy; and by such regulations and rules as may be made under the authority of the Constitution and Schedules. As President, it is a condition of your employment that you comply at all times with the Constitution and Schedules and with all other policies, procedures, regulations and rules of the GU as may be issued and/or amended from time to time. Failure to comply may lead to disciplinary action being taken against you.

3 Sabbatical Trustee

As President of the GU, you are also appointed as a Sabbatical Trustee. The GU is a registered charity and, as a Sabbatical Trustee, it is also a condition of
your employment that you comply at all times with the obligations and responsibilities of a charity trustee in the discharge of your duties as President.

As a Sabbatical Trustee, you will be a member of the Board of Trustees. To avoid conflicts of interest arising from your appointment as a Sabbatical Trustee and your employment by the GU, the GU operates a conflict of interest policy which precludes you from participating in any decision of the Board of Trustees relating to, or arising from, this contract of employment.

4 Line management

As President and as a Sabbatical Trustee, you are directly responsible to the Trustee Board. The Board of Trustees will nominate your line manager, who will be notified to you prior to commencement of your employment. If your line manager is not available at any time, another Trustee will act in this role.

5 Right to work in the UK

It is a condition of your employment that you are entitled to work in the UK without any additional approvals. Prior to the commencement of this contract, you shall produce to the Board of Trustees of the GU either a valid UK passport or other documentation which confirms that you have the right to work in the UK. Should that right cease at any time during the expected term of this employment contract, you shall immediately notify your line manager, whereupon this contract will be terminated without notice and the office of President vacated forthwith.

6 Place of employment

You will be based at the GU offices in Cambridge although you will also be required to attend elsewhere in the University of Cambridge and its constituent Colleges. On occasions, you may be required to travel further afield on GU business including occasional overnight stay.

7 Hours of work

For any period during which you are a student and working on a Tier 4 Student Visa, the Graduate Union must comply with the associated legal requirements in relation to your hours of work. During any period considered term time, you must not work for more than 20 hours per week, and your salary will be paid at a pro rata rate in accordance with this. For any period during which you are a student and working on a Tier 4 Visa and which is considered vacation time, or any period for which you hold a Tier 4 Visa permitting you to undertake full-time work as a sabbatical officer, you are required to work full-time on GU business for not less than 40 hours per week. This will include attendance at meetings that are necessary in the normal course of your duties as GU President. Under the Working Time Regulations 1998, you are not required to work more than 48 hours per week.

When working full-time, on Monday to Friday each week, you are expected to work not less than 5 hours daily between the hours of 10am and 4pm. This work should normally be undertaken at the GU offices unless the duties require you to be elsewhere. You will be required to maintain and keep up-to-date your Google calendar so that the GU Manager and other colleagues are informed at all times of your whereabouts during standard working hours (9am to 5pm) if you are not in the GU office or otherwise on a period of authorised absence. Note that the
stipulated hours you are required to attend the GU office total 25 hours per week and therefore you are required to work at least 12.5 hours in addition to fulfil your contractual working hours obligation. These expectations will not apply if you are working part-time during term time as a student.

The GU will communicate with you to ensure all parties are in agreement about any period of time for which you are working part-time.

Time off in lieu may be given for legitimate GU business conducted during the evenings, early mornings (i.e. outside the hours of 9am to 5pm) and weekends. A request for time off in lieu should be made to your line manager who will exercise due discretion as to whether such a request is to be granted.

You may choose to work a greater number of hours than those contractually specified and such additional hours are at your discretion. No overtime will be paid and no time off in lieu will be given for additional hours worked.

8 Remuneration

You will be paid a gross salary of £----- per annum prorated payable monthly in arrears net of income tax and Employer’s national insurance contributions, which will be deducted by the GU. For any period that you are working part-time, your salary will be scaled down (prorated) in accordance with the number of hours you are working.

Payment will be made on or about the 26th of each month and paid by credit transfer directly to your bank or building society. The GU will be entitled to deduct from your salary any money which you may owe to the GU at any time.

9 Expenses

Reasonable expenses incurred by you in transacting GU business will be refunded by the GU on production of valid receipts to the GU Manager and in line with GU financial policy.

10 Holiday

During the fixed term of this employment contract, you will be entitled to 36 days paid holiday, including bank holidays. There is no entitlement to pay in lieu of holidays. Your holiday entitlement is calculated on a pro rata basis for each complete month worked. Prior to expiry of the specified fixed term (or if sooner terminated on notice) you will be entitled to take any outstanding holiday entitlement before your employment ends. Solely in the event that it is not practical to grant your holiday entitlement before your employment ends, you will be paid salary in lieu of accrued but untaken holiday.

You must give notice to your line manager of the holidays you intend to take. For holiday of one week or less, at least one week’s notice will normally be required. For holiday of more than one week, at least three weeks’ notice is required and you should also obtain the prior agreement of your line manager.

Holidays will not be permitted during University Full Term, other than in exceptional circumstances and with the prior consent of your line manager. Holiday absences may also not be authorised in the period prior to publication deadlines and at other times of the year which are busy with GU activities.
Unpaid leave may be granted at the discretion of the Trustee Board.

For the avoidance of doubt, time spent searching for other employment (including but not limited to time spent campaigning for election or re-election to a sabbatical post) must be taken as holiday.

11 Absence through sickness

You shall inform the GU Manager if you are ill or otherwise unable to attend work and shall do so before 9.30am on the first day of absence. On any subsequent working days of sick leave, you are required to keep the GU Manager informed as to your state of health and your expected date of return.

For sickness absence of up to 7 consecutive working days, you must provide a sickness self-certificate. For sickness absence of more than 7 consecutive working days, you must produce a doctor’s certificate.

You will be entitled to sick pay for a maximum of 20 days during the fixed period of this employment contract. Any absence beyond this limit will be paid at statutory sick pay (if applicable) or will be unpaid, save that the Trustee Board may, in exceptional circumstances, agree to extend the period of paid sick leave at their sole discretion.

12 Role and Responsibilities

Your role and responsibilities as President are as set out in the Schedules to the Constitution of the GU. As President of the GU and as one of the GU’s Sabbatical trustees, you will be acting on behalf of the GU when carrying out duties relating to the representation and support of GU members, in accordance with and in furtherance of GU strategy, policy and procedures as agreed and as may be amended from time to time.

During the period of 1 July to 15 July 2020, you will be responsible for managing a full and orderly handover of responsibility to the incoming President.

13 Academic study

It is a condition of the terms of your employment that you shall not begin and nor shall you continue any full-time academic course of study during the period of your employment by the GU.

14 Confidential Information

You shall not use or disclose to any third party, either during or at any time after your employment with the GU, any confidential information about the business affairs of the GU or about any matters which may come to your knowledge in the course of your employment. For the purposes of this paragraph, confidential information means any information which is not in the public domain (other than as a consequence of your breach of this agreement) and which relates to any of the affairs of the GU.

15 Return of GU property

At the end of your employment with the GU, you must return to the Executive Administrator all property of the GU that is still in your possession. This includes
keys, security tags, records and documents (whether in hard copy or electronic format) that relate to your work for the GU and which are necessary and/or useful to the GU’s continued operation.

16 Termination of your employment prior to expiry of the fixed term

If you wish to terminate this contract of employment by resignation prior to the expiry of the fixed term, you must submit your resignation in writing to the Board of Trustees. You are required to give four weeks’ notice.

The Board of Trustees shall terminate this contract of employment prior to expiry of the fixed term if a motion of no confidence in your presidency is passed in accordance with the GU’s Constitution. Such a vote of no confidence will have the effect of vacating the office of President and this employment will end forthwith. If this contract of employment is so terminated, you will receive payment of your salary for two weeks from the date of termination or until 15 July 2019, whichever is sooner.

The Board of Trustees shall be entitled to dismiss you at any time without notice (or pay in lieu of notice) if you commit a serious breach of your obligations as an employee of the GU, or if you cease to be eligible to serve as a Sabbatical Trustee and/or if you cease to be entitled to work in the UK.

17 Discipline and grievance procedures

Your attention is drawn to the disciplinary and grievance procedures applicable to your employment which are contained in the GU staff handbook. The Board of Trustees shall be entitled to suspend you on full pay for the purposes of investigating any allegation of misconduct against you.

18 Data Protection

You agree that, by signing this contract of employment, you have given consent to the GU to process personal data concerning you in order for the GU to fulfil its obligations to you under this contract and for reasons relating to your employment as required by the Data Protection Act 1998. Such processing of data will principally be for personnel, administrative and payroll purposes.

19 Jurisdiction

This contract of employment shall be governed by and shall be construed in accordance with the laws of England.

Yours sincerely,

Chair/ Deputy Chair, GU Trustee Board

I acknowledge receipt of the letter of which this is a duplicate and confirm that I agree to the terms and conditions it contains.

Signed: ………………………………

Date: ………………………………. 
c.031218: G : Questions for GU Council on teaching allocation

Cambridge GU, CUSU and CUCU are planning to work together to propose to implement a system for a more transparent and fair allocation of teaching hours, notably supervision. It would help a lot if you could consider the following points:

1. Are you aware of any form of system to allocate teaching hours in your faculty / department or college?
2. Would you be in favour of such a system being implemented (or, in the case of existing systems, reformed)?
3. What do you think would be the best way for this to include as many potential supervisors as possible (e.g. sending a form via faculty mailing lists, and / or colleges ones)?
4. Below is a list of questions that could be asked to potential supervisors. Do you agree with them, and do you think something important is missing?

   a. Terms you wish to supervise;
   b. Preferred, and maximum, number of hours you would like to teach each term;
   c. Papers you would be prepared to teach, listed in order of preference;
   d. Any relevant experience;

The form could also include information from either the faculty or the college about the amount of preparation time which is expected for each hour of supervision.