

Graduate Students' Association Council
18/11/2019 - 6pm
Venue: Vanbrugh VN/139

Minutes

Present: Purnur Altay (President)
Clara Garcia (VP: Wellbeing and Community)
Jane Baston (VP: Academic)
Suzanne Lengewa (Chair)
Sameer Jangam (Volunteering Officer)
Minko Minev (Communities Officer)
Jessie Shepherd (Equalities Officer)
Charlotte Lade (Events Officer)
Amy Hopkins (Faculty Rep: Arts and Humanities)
Daniel Ghete (Faculty Rep: Sciences)

In attendance: Darryl Butcher (CEO)
Chris Bovis (Minutes)
Ayse Ciftci (Candidate for Sports Officer)
Elizabeth Kuria (Candidate for Colleges Officer)

Apologies: None received

1. Welcome
 2. Apologies (as above)
 3. Sports Officer Appointment
 - a. AC introduced herself and her involvement in GSA Sports since the start of her PhD and wanting to get involved and work to improve our provision. Unanimously approved.
 4. Colleges Officer Appointment
 - . EK introduced herself and said a little about her background. She wants to work with colleges to improve the link between colleges and the GSA. Unanimously approved.
 5. Approval of previous minutes
 - . C recognises that the Council has changed significantly since the previous meeting. The minutes need to be approved: **P** and **VP:A** approved.
 6. Matters arising
 - . C aimed this agenda meeting to the end of the meeting - if time withstands, due to the fact that many of the matters were undertaken by previous officers.
 7. Reports
 - . Written Reports from the Officers
- i. President
1. **P** introduces her report. September was a month of training, WW and NW. **P** says that it was a busy period but was really good to meet with lots of students. Spent a lot of time going to committees and UEB away days working to shape the University's 10-year plan.
 2. Campaign work is progressing - manifesto points are moving along. **P** has decided to change her aim and work to address off-campus accommodation (to reflect PG accommodation realities). **P** mentions her work to restart YorProperty with the University after the Council

defunded it. Rent Guarantee Scheme is being reviewed and **P** would like to use this opportunity to aim to expand the provision. Languages for All work is continuing, and **P** is looking to expand the provision to support PG students.

3. [QUESTIONS] **FR:S** sought greater clarity on the support that **P** wants to work on for off-campus accommodation. **P** raises the fact that shady landlords may not use the legal deposit schemes and that international students, unfamiliar with the process, do not yet understand their rights - in terms of accommodation standards, tenant rights etc. **CO** queried about the current status of the project - **P** says that it's early and is still in the data gathering stage. **MM** raised whether it's the most practical way of helping - **P** said that there's little to be done to increase the number of rooms available on campus so the focus is on improving the reality for students off-campus. **FR:AH** questions whether the GSA can put information on our website (or get the university to put information up) to support incoming students - dedicated to accommodation. **EO** told about how she found a landlord rating website - which had been recommended by other international students. **CoIO** asks about data gathering and the means by which data is gathered - **P** is working with the university and council to bring the people together to see what information is already accessible. **C** asks about timelines - **P** isn't sure at this time as the information has been difficult to access. She is developing a timeline and project database, then she will share the information.

[ACTION: P to share her project database/timeline once appropriate.]

ii. VP: Wellbeing and Community

1. **VP:WC** introduces her report. She talks about the support she's building for the network coordinators. **VP:WC** is meeting monthly with network coordinators to ensure that there are consistently monthly opportunities for students to get involved in. **VP:WC** is trying to establish a BAME network - in BHM **VP:WC** worked with students to establish a decolonise your bookshelf campaign and is hoping to set up a book club that students can attend to generate interest in the BAME network.
2. **VP:WC** is hosting events throughout the months so far to ensure that there's a lot of activities going on for different campaigns.
3. Sexual violence on campus campaign is progressing - **VP:WC** is looking to see what this can consist of, so as not to duplicate the work done in previous years. **VP:WC** is liaising with external bodies, the university and YUSU to look at ensure the campaign is as inclusive as possible. **VP:WC** aims to lobby the university to introduce a policy on student-staff relationships, treatment of students in general etc.
4. **VP:WC** is working with the Academic Officer at YUSU and **VP:A** on diversifying the curriculum. **VP:A** is aiming to examine what this means in practice for the university and hoping to establish a working group to ensure that it has longevity in its impact.
5. In terms of events and activities, **VP:WC** is making herself available to set up student-led projects. This includes religious celebrations, film showings, english conversation classes, etc.

6. Working to improve sports sessions; attending committees; designing a mental health campaign; establishing a sex-worker campaign online with panel discussion; and is looking at improving accessibility and transparency of the GSA.
7. [QUESTION] **SO** raises questions about the sports work **VP:WC** wants to work on. **VP:WC** talks about attendance to ensure that the sessions are being used and potentially working to have sports coordinators. **VP:WC** relishes the flexibility of the sports sessions and wants to work with YUSU where possible to ensure they are as effective as possible. **[ACTION: VP:WC to play squash.] CoIO** asks about the events that have been organised so far and how the events are advertised to the wider community - is attendance going well? **VP:WC** says that on average 30-40 attendees, with the exception of the LGBT+ film screening. Advertisement is through the groups on social media, using the newsletter and pushing it on the main central pages to grow the audience. **CoIO** asks if we have targets for events and ways of measuring the impact. **CoIO** says that she's relatively happy with events at the moment as they are moving quickly. Family network events had 40 attendees. **VP:A** says that in Arts and Hums, there's been some barriers to the work going on to improve diversity and requests that **VP:WC** try to assist. **VP:WC** is happy to help - issues stem from students not coming forward. **EO** raises the same issues in SocSci. **[ACTION: VP:A and EO to work with VP:WC on decolonising the curriculum.]**

iii.VP: Academic

1. **VP:A** introduces herself and has said she's spent the last few months familiarising herself with committees and all the acronyms. Has been getting to know policy at the uni and the GSA; quality assurance; training; attending meetings and her role in general.
2. Course Reps - Elections, update to the report. 186 Course Reps at present. Training and support being offered - training was a success. Drop-ins and newsletters and general support.
3. Ipad loans for PGs - **P** and **VP:A** working with the library to figure out the logistics and support. Goal for the release is to be in place by the end of April.
4. Student Engagement Project - university establish a committee to work on improving PG engagement.
5. Student App/Attendance monitoring - two projects, related, to develop an app and capture student attendance at lectures and seminars. **VP:A** working with the university to ensure that it is best for students, is effective and that all students will be able to access it.
6. PG network - working with the PG Officers across the country. Discussing with officers the provision offered by NUS and the lack of support being offered. Education Officer at NUS now given a specific designated funds at NUS but unclear priorities or focuses.
7. PRES - looking at the results and implementing improvements.
8. Staff-Student Relationship policy
9. GTA improvements. **VP:A** wants to introduce a pay-grade for GTAs to try and mitigate the problems of casualisation. (akin to Sheffield and Edinburgh). Working to grow the GTA network and find a coordinator.

10. Distance Learners - increasing group of students and working with the university to improve student voice.
11. [QUESTIONS] **EO** talks about the policy for Staff-Student Relationships. **VP:A** and **VP:WC** are working with the Dean of the Graduate Research School to bring the policy in.

b. Verbal Reports from Council Members

.Chair - asks for those reports if they have any, as they are new in role.

i. Volunteering

1. **VO** had a meeting with **VP:WC** and **CEC** to discuss the projects taking place. Discusses growing the volunteer list (80 students so far), and is going to find more information about the type of volunteering experiences that they are after. **VO** is going to contact local organisations and work on finding opportunities.
2. In development is a volunteering week to encourage PG students to get more involved in volunteering work. Hoping to organise it so speakers are about to come together and put forward talks.
3. Potentially setting up volunteering champions to act as promoters of different types of volunteering opportunities.

9. CEO Appointment

- b. **DB** introduces himself as the new CEO. He's been in role just over two months, gives some information about his background and is hoping to grow and support the GSA.

1. Industrial Action

- b. Chair introduces the report - and outlines the options available. Opens the floor for general discussion.

.Argument for Support put forward - PG students want to go into academia and the pension/inequality problems will affect those students. Issues raised with logistics of an EGM and Referendum - Council feel these options would be unrealistic and, especially given the short window of time, futile (results would be after the first strike has ended). The impact on students was raised. The impact on assessments, research, examinations and international students were specifically focused. Highlighted need for the GSA to focus on ensuring students had assessed to all the support that was available. Point raised that the action was extended last time and the impact going forward. It was raised that students are significantly concerned, even scared at the prospect of a prolonged industrial action. Several Council members raised the diversity of GSA membership - that the GSA should do its best to support all students. Mentions that there seems to be polarisation of students. Point raised that international GTAs are stuck as they aren't sure of their rights and they need the money, but if their lecturers strike they might lose out. There was a discussion on the two strike issues - pensions and casualisation, etc.

i. Question about what the strike means in terms of access - some services might close or be reduced hours; minimalised lectures and seminar and whether the GSA could address these to ensure lack of confusion. Response was that departments should notify the students in advance, and services should have information on their social media/website. The GSA would know at the same time as students so cannot necessarily distribute information in advance. Disruption to students that travel for lectures. Are students going to know on the day? No obligation to let students know beforehand.

ii. Issues raised with how the action will affect students with upcoming assessments. Will lost time be made up? Lectures won't be made up, but there are potentially slides/reading lists etc will be distributed.

iii. A vote was called with multiple options given. These were 1) Support; 2) Oppose; 3) Neutral Stance; 4) Do nothing; 5) Hold an EGM; 6) Referendum; 7) Optional Extra raised by Council (no was).

[The result was Overwhelming Support of the Industrial Action]

- v. The Council wanted the result to be conditional on the following: That it was clear the staff are neutral and that the GSA will support all students

regardless; that the GSA wants the dispute resolved as soon as possible and should encourage parties to negotiate; provide information to students about the strike and make clear what the GSA is supporting and what this means for students.

vi. Make the statement clear what the GSA is supporting, what that means for classes, gtas. We support the cause, not the disruption. Language is important. Council would like a final sign-off. Ensure time limit is noticed. Statement vs FAQ - on the website.

10. Any Other Business

VP:A - no SocSci Faculty Rep yet, so if you know of any current course reps that want to be involved.