

minutes

Meeting:	Postgraduate Committee
Date:	21 st May 2019
Paper:	Postgraduate Committee Spring 19 – 4 (PGCS485)
Author:	Alexandros Efstratiou
Purpose:	Record of Decision Making

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Minutes of the Postgraduate Committee 21st May 2019

Committee members present: Martin Marko (Postgraduate Education Officer), Oli Gray (Activities and Opportunities Officer), Georgina Burchell (Welfare, Community, and Diversity Officer), James McLean (AMA), Charlotte Hallahan (LDC), Anush Rajagopal (LAW), Saket Jalan (NBS)

Chair: Andrea James (AMA)

Apologies: Sophie Atherton (Campaigns and Democracy Officer), Rob Klim (DEV)

In attendance: Josh Melling (Student Engagement Coordinator – PG), Alexandros Efstratiou (Advocacy Assistant), Lewis Martin (Chair of Democratic Procedures Committee)

PGCS485 Statement from the Chair

-AJ welcomes members to the last assembly of the year, and reminds everyone to remain active on Teams for ongoing discussions and reviewing funding applications.

PGCS486 Minutes of the Last Meeting

-Minutes are approved unanimously.

PGCS487 Action Log

-OG states that, following conversations with UEASport, it arises that their mini-vans cannot be used by the postgraduate committee, as these can only be booked for use by sports clubs. They add, however, that there have been some internal discussions around the possibility of sub-letting a mini-van for the exclusive use of PG committee.

ACTION: OG to look into sub-letting a mini-van.

-JM confirms that the point around including a reflective paragraph and an event photograph as terms for the conference fund has been acted upon.

PGCS488 Update from Assembly & Assembly Review

-AJ sets the context around the need to review the assembly and initiates a discussion on how it should be conducted.

-LM states that the questions posed at previous assembly for discussion at committee are questions posed across the board, since engagement problems exist with all student representation bodies. They specifically focus around the question of accountability of the Postgraduate Education Officer at the assembly.

-MM states that this is something which could arise from a broader conversation around how the PEO is held accountable and their specific points of accountability.

-AJ states that the PEO should be held accountable to the students they represent.

-GB states that this is a big question which is currently being tackled by a democracy review that SA is undertaking, for the entirety of the SU democracy. GB explains that an example of a potential re-structure are focus groups with students.

-MM states that focus groups have already been conducted to examine PGR engagement, as part of a policy passed last year.

-JM explains that the results of these focus groups have not yet been finalised, however from the discussions, PGRs cited the same engagement barriers that they have historically faced, such as lack of time, non-awareness of SU structures, and lack of outreach, among others. The main point that arose was that the current structure does not represent PGRs, and they would

like to have a taught degree officer and a research degree officer, rather than an undergraduate and postgraduate officer. There were also issues around NBI's distance from UEA, and NBI students requested a part-time officer who is based in the Norwich Research Park.

-MM states that NBI students are unsure as to what they would like to see, following meetings with them.

-JML asks what the democracy review would entail for the chair of assembly, in terms of how much consultation they should have with the postgraduate committee regarding changes to the assembly, as the assembly chair is currently quite independent in how they conduct the assembly.

-AJ states that the initial plan was to hold the assembly in the Graduate Centre rather than closing it off in a room.

-MM states that the move into the bookable rooms happened due to some technicalities around using open spaces for this purpose.

-JM explains that this was not necessarily the case. There was a one-off situation where the assembly chair required the screens inside the bookable rooms, which is why the assembly was moved there. For reasons unclear, the assembly simply continued to happen in the bookable rooms from that point onward.

-The committee deliberates on whether a deputy chair of assembly is needed.

-AJ states that it would be better if the assembly as a whole fell with the postgraduate committee, so that committee members could take over its conductance in case that the chair cannot attend.

-LM concurs and states that this is also the case with the Democratic Procedures Committee.

-JML and LM state that it is imperative that the assembly time is kept consistent and at a time that works for students, since continuously moving the assembly around would cause uncertainty that could lead to disengagement.

-JML states that there needs to be a mechanism to inform students about the benefits of the assembly in a clear manner, for example through slides displayed on the Scholars screens or through posters.

-OG states that such communications, along with officer titles, also form part of the democratic review.

-JML suggests designing a screen slide along the lines of "what assembly can do for you".

-JM states that a paper for an assembly re-structure was brought to, and signed off by, assembly last year, so this student consultation could take place this year as well. They recall that a suggestion was to hold assembly once per semester.

-AJ states that such reduced frequency could allow for more elaborate events, resource-wise.

- JM states that the current frequency was decided based on the assembly's capacity to send policy to Union Council, although no motions were sent by assembly to Council this year.
- Following a question by AJ, JM states that the working group decided to remove the formalities and simply converse with people in a lounge.
- AJ states that this would work better for populations that are more difficult to attain engagement from, such as postgraduates.
- AE clarifies that students expressed a desire to simply put issues forward to then be tackled by their representatives, rather than formally engaging with democratic structures. Therefore, assembly could act as a delegation mechanism to representatives.
- MM asks how the possibility that student statements are misunderstood or not adequately tackled will be rectified if assembly is re-structured to this capacity.
- AE explains that this could happen by background frameworks that the committee can follow when interacting with students.
- JM adds that consultations with students on committee actions can be carried out at subsequent assembly meetings.
- Following a question by JM, the committee agrees that the agendas for assembly should be open, rather than specific.
- LM states that MM should also attend assembly meetings with this new structure. MM concurs.
- AJ asks who should set the assembly agenda. MM believes it was agreed to discard agendas altogether from assemblies. AJ clarifies that this is in reference to points that arose from previous assemblies. The committee concurs to leave the creation of the agenda with the chair of assembly and the Postgraduate Education Officer.
- OG suggests modelling the assembly after student staff meetings, where student staff have the opportunity to find out what is happening within the union, and put forward any questions or issues they have.

ACTION: JM to write up the proposed changes to assembly and circulate these with the committee via Teams.

PGCS489 Committee Elections & Handover 2019/20

- AJ asks what people found useful from last year's handover.
- GB states that the handbook was good.
- JM asks if they would like to see any changes. Following a question by LM, JM states that elections will be held online.
- AJ asks about election timings. MM states that early October may be too early. LM explains that, the farther elections are pushed, the less committee meetings can be held in a year.
- JM explains that, following consultations with relevant people in the SU, the elections this year were held at the latest possible point. However, they acknowledge that holding elections early

may be excluding 1st year PGRs who are still going through their induction at that time.

-AJ and AR suggest holding elections somewhere in mid-October to include as many PGs as possible.

-JM states that the first committee meeting would then have to happen within the first two weeks of November.

-MM suggests looking into whether other elections, such as course rep elections, can be held at the same time as PG elections, so that all election rules and nominations can be published at the same time.

-AJ states that, historically, PG elections were always held separately because general election rules were not necessarily relevant to PG elections.

-LM reminds the committee that PG representatives are volunteers, so there are limits as to how much can be asked of them in terms of time and personal resources.

-JM states that the committee can now deliberate on how elections can be run.

-AJ asks how displaying candidate manifestos on the screen at the first assembly of the year worked.

-MM states that the aim should be for elections to be as accessible as possible and please as many students as possible.

-AJ stresses that the different experiences of PGTs and PGRs need to be accounted for and balanced when it comes to planning elections. They add that they are happy with the way that elections ran last year.

-JML suggests allowing nominees the option to make a speech.

-JM states that nominee manifestos can be displayed on Scholars screens in the run-up to the election.

-MM asks if it is appropriate for the committee to decide on the election procedures, and whether students should be consulted.

-LM states that ultimately, the decision on how elections are conducted falls with the Returning Officer.

-AJ and JML state that the committee could collaborate over Teams to come up with an election plan.

-JM states that the committee can take their plan to the Returning Officer and ask them if it complies with bye-laws and the SU constitution.

ACTION: JM to write up and circulate the election procedure for this year's committee elections.

PGCS490 Budget Update & Conference Fund Discussion

-JM clarifies that, although the financial year ends at the end of August, any purchases must be made by early July in order for the payments to be processed on time.

-SJ suggests having an initial cap on how much of the conference fund should go to PGRs and PGTs.

-AJ states that they would be hesitant to do this, as conferences are more integral to PGRs. They add that they have re-allocated money to the conference fund to accommodate everyone.

- LM concurs, and states that this would send many wrong messages to PGRs.
- SJ states that the caps could be flexible and re-allocated later on.
- LM states that the historical uptake of the conference fund by PGTs needs to be accounted for. Following a question by LM, JM states that three PGT students applied for the conference fund this year.
- AR states that the conference fund should be rationed more properly, since the committee approved too much money for a single student at times. They suggest having a hard cap for what can be approved with a single conference fund application.
- AJ states that the committee exists to make such judgments at their discretion, through means of voting.
- GB adds that such decisions are up to next year's committee to make.
- JM concurs and clarifies that this particular agenda point is with reference to what will happen with the remaining money for this year.
- JML states that, with reference to the funding application review procedure, they would have benefitted from more familiarity with Teams.

ACTION: JM to allocate a more significant portion of committee training to Teams setup and Teams training.

- MM states that the money left in the campaigns budget may be used for DTS-related and induction-related actions.
- JM states that materials such as bookmarks with assembly dates on them can be created for induction.
- The committee deliberates on how much spending should be allocated per head for induction materials.
- JM explains that a lot of the money for induction will come from a central budget, since these are welcome-related events and materials.
- AJ states that the summer events must be decided before the budget can be reviewed (budget update is at the end of Item PGCS492).

PGCS491 Summer Events Programme

- AR suggests holding a large-scale party.
- JM states that this would potentially use up the entire summer budget.
- The committee provides alternative suggestions. These include:
 - Dash
 - Mini-golf
 - Bowling
 - Great Yarmouth or other coastal trip
 - Nature Walk
 - Interactive Green Spaces
 - Allotment events (e.g. gardening)

- Strawberry picking
- Walk in Thetford Forest
- Holkham
- Walk in the Broads
- Pub and Paddle
- Tea and Cake
- Pub Crawl
- Pool League

ACTION: JM and AE to cost the suggested events and send these to committee.

-MM suggests having tea & cake in other PGR spaces rather than in the bar.

-JML states that it would be good to have the event in a space that should be identified as a PG space, therefore it would be wise to keep holding this event in Scholars.

-Following MM's suggestion around holding a pool league over summer, JM states that, although there are some costs associated with this, it attracts a different demographic of PG students who do not generally engage with pg(su), and it therefore may be beneficial to hold.

PGCS492 Postgraduate Yoga

-JM explains that the previous Yoga instructor is leaving, and a new one has been recruited.

-AJ suggests paying the instructor for an additional half hour per week, for them to advertise the Yoga sessions on social media and otherwise, so that Yoga administration completely falls with them.

-Committee concurs.

-AJ asks whether they should hold a single 1.5-hour session per week, or two 1-hour sessions.

-AJ suggests having a 1-hour session over summer, due to the decreased demand, and additionally pay the instructor an additional half hour per week for administration.

-JM suggests splitting the 30 minutes of administration into 20 minutes for advertising and 10 minutes for in-room preparation.

Following discussion, the committee decides to re-allocate the budget as follows:

- £38 to be re-allocated from campaigns to activities.
- £350 to be re-allocated from campaigns to the Social Grant. Anything that is not spent from the Social Grant by June 20th will then be re-allocated to activities.

The new budget is therefore:

- Conference fund: £875
- Social grant: £505 (until June 20th, after which remaining funds are re-allocated to activities)
- Activities: £1580

- Campaigns: £150

PGCS493 Any Other Business

-JML states that, while they appreciate MM's effort in creating an NUS report, it is still unclear what procedures were followed and what transpired at NUS. They request that MM revisits their report and makes some clarifications.

-JML also asks why MM was not present at the STARs awards.

-LM seconds this, and stresses that the PEO should have been present, especially since some of the committee members were nominated for awards.

-JML states that these are the kinds of events that MM needs to be attending if they are to build a stronger community and a good image for themselves.

-MM states that they could not make it to the event.

-JML and AJ state that MM should have at least sent their congratulations to nominated members, and communicated that they would not be attending the event beforehand.

-AJ thanks everyone for devoting their time to committee meetings.

PGCS494 Time, Date, and Place of next meeting

N/A (this was last committee meeting of the year). Subsequent meetings may be organised, if needed, at the chair's discretion.

Appendix

PGCS485 Action Log 21st May 2019

Date Commissioned	Action Required	Assigned To:	Date to be actioned by:
21/05/19	Look into sub-letting mini-vans for the exclusive use of the postgraduate committee	OG	30/07/19
21/05/19	Write up proposed changes to the assembly and circulate these with committee via Teams	JM	27/05/19
21/05/19	Write up the election procedure for this year's committee elections	JM	27/05/19
21/05/19	Allocate a more significant portion of committee training to Teams setup and Teams training	JM	30/09/19
21/05/19	Cost the events suggested by committee, and return these costings to committee to consider	JM, AE	28/05/19