

Meeting:	Postgraduate Committee
Date:	3 rd December 2019
Paper:	Postgraduate Committee Autumn 19
Author:	Scott Arthur
Purpose:	Record of Decision Making

uea|su

Minutes of the Postgraduate Committee 03/12/2019

Committee Members Present: Alicia Perez (Activities and Opportunities Officer), Amelia Trew (Welfare, Community and Diversity Officer), Sophie Atherton (Campaigns and Democracy Officer), Martin Marko (Postgraduate Education Officer), Benjamin Pinsent (AMA), Gina Kim (ENV), Lewis Martin (PPL), Subeer Sarkar (NBS), Megan Pay (PPL), Matthew Gallagher (PPL)

Chair: Matthew Gallagher

In Attendance: Josh Melling (Student Engagement Coordinator – PG), Scott Arthur (Advocacy Assistant)

PGCA503 Statements from the Chair [s]

MG welcomed committee to the meeting, and apologised for the change of location at such short notice. Stated that it had been a busy period of time since the last meeting, with the strike action undertaken by UCU.

PGCA504 Minutes of the Last Meeting [s]

Minutes unanimously accepted by committee.

PGCA505 Action Log [s]

AP101 - MM confirmed that he had undertaken action 101 earlier in the day. Stated that there does not seem to be an issue in regard to staff protocol, and that if merged it could work similar to the working groups the committee already has in place. Commented that it was up to committee in regard to how to proceed.

MG sought clarification on the proposal – he believed that the intention had been to merge the GCMG and PGC so as to avoid duplication of discussion. Commented that if these discussions were going to be delegated away from committee anyway, then the merger may not be necessary.

MM responded that the merge would move it into the democratic structure of the union and therefore make it more accountable.

LM argued that if the intention of this was to create one less meeting, then surely this merger and delegation did not achieve that goal.

MG reiterated that committee had discussed this at the previous meeting, and were not keen on the idea at that point in time.

BP commented that at the last meeting it was perceived that the merger would make meetings last significantly longer than at present.

MP queried what would be gained from moving the body from the management to democratic structure.

MM clarified that he perceived it would become a standing agenda item, and not a separate meeting. Argued that it would not take up too much space or time but would provide greater scope for discussion.

MG proposed that this committee would be able to raise issues and give them to the representatives (MP & LM) to take forward. Questioned MM as to whether this is what he was proposing.

SA introduced the Direction and Oversight Boards which she perceived to be similar to the GCMC, and stressed the importance of them 'staying there.' Admitted that while these DOBs are part of the democratic structure they do not function as part of it, and instead feed into management committee. Expressed a personal preference for the status quo not to change.

MM admitted that this was an interesting point – and voiced whether the GCMC could be shaped to be more like a DOBs.

MG stated that the GCMC is a 'DOB by any other name' – in that it performs many of the same roles as the DOBs, but is not named as such. Further stated that MM was in effect proposing what was already in place.

MM asked whether it would make sense to streamline these processes for DOB's in general.

MG stated that this would be an issue to raise to management committee and to discuss there, if wholesale changes were desired.

MM asked committee what they thought the way forward was, opened it up for further discussion.

MG brought the issue to a vote; to merge or keep the bodies separate. This vote passed with 9 in favour, and 1 against.

AP102 – LM updated that a discussion had been had, and funding had come from SOC to support strike action. Stated that due to a lack of time a wider ranging discussion had not yet taken place.

SA added that an emergency funding request could be submitted to support events.

This action has been rolled over to the next meeting.

AP103 – AP opened by saying that herself and MM had taken a paper to SEC, detailing that UEA Sport was failing PG's in regard to their sports offer. Stated that university staff did not believe that SEC was the place for this to be discussed, and it should instead have been taken to SPAC (Student Sport and Physical Activity Committee).

MM added that this was a fair point, and that it could be discussed at SPAC. Clarified that this was the space to be having future discussions of this nature.

AP clarified that the staff in question often encourage discussions off the record, and not in front of a university board. Confirmed that the paper will be taken to SPAC on the 13/02/20. Explained that she foresaw herself having to eventually go back to SEC with the paper regardless. Further explained that she would raise the issue in other meetings to find some way forward in the meantime.

MM added that in addition to this issue, he has had discussion with PG's who were concerned that they could not access sports on Wednesday afternoons because they had contact hours scheduled.

AP clarified that BUCS (British University & College Sport) had previously lobbied to keep Wednesday afternoons clear for undergraduates to participate in sports, but no such provision exists in regard to postgraduate students.

MM explained that this was rejected at a university level, as it was perceived to introduce additional complexity to the process of timetabling.

AP further added that support from BUCS was significant in securing this provision for undergraduates, and that without similar support for postgraduates it might be difficult to have this change introduced. Explained that she was going to the BUCS AGM on the 05/12/19 and would have discussions with the relevant individuals in regard to this issue.

Action point 103 has rolled over to next meeting.

Action: AP to attend BUCS conference and have relevant discussions.*

AP104 – MM confirmed that he had a brief look in regard to this, and confirmed that the information was not centrally located in one specific area. Stated that the next step would be to get in touch with each school specifically, and establish what their individual processes were. Questioned whether it would be possible to integrate that into this committee's process.

MG clarified that it was not necessary to integrate the school funding and this committee's funding, and that that was not the intention of the action point.

BP agreed that the intention was to collate all the information and provide more access to the information than some faculties do.

MG identified that people come to PGC for funding because the process is perceived to be simpler.

BP explained that it simply needs to be how to apply and what you can apply for, and doesn't need to be too complicated.

MG queried whether this could become a campaign.

SA clarified that the best way to do this would be to mandate MM to contact school managers regarding information about how to apply for funding and to collate it centrally on the UEA|SU Website.

Action: MM to liaise with staff support in collecting, and collating information in regard to applying for funding.

AP105 – MG queried whether a question had been added in regard to who applications for funding are considered by.

JM explained that this has been done.

Action point resolved.

AP106 – MG queried whether a note had been added that explained that if applicants are funded by a research council, then their applications will automatically go to committee for approval.

JM explained that this also has been done.

Action point resolved.

AP107 – MG explained that this action point had not been discussed as of yet, but that can be taken up again in the New Year.

MM queried collecting more information in regard to this.

BP explained that similarly to 104 simplicity was important.

AP showed MM examples of other grants that societies and clubs can apply for, explaining that this could serve as an example.

MG stated that this was important to discuss later down the line.

BP queried how prioritising certain groups would work when applications are approved as they come in, as opposed to being held back for discussion.

MM explained that marketing could achieve this.

AP questioned whether deadlines could be used to approve applications en masse as opposed to doing them as they come in.

JM highlighted that students who may urgently need funding might not apply for other schemes if this deadline comes into effect. At least if they are rejected at the present time they know immediately.

LM reiterated the importance of conferences to PG students and that this proposal had the potential to limit their ability to attend.

JM stated that traditionally the fund has not been that hotly contested, but instead of rejecting people, the last committee agreed to transfer funds from elsewhere in the budget to fill this shortfall.

MG explained that the committee can continue to discuss this at a later date.

MP and AP requested to join the working group in regard to this issue.

Action: MG to liaise with other members and to arrange a time and place to take discussions forward.

AP108 – MM explained that an explanation had come out as part of The Square, and explained the drop ins that are happening as part of it.

MG stated that the action was to put that in teams and still needed to be completed.

Action 108 has been rolled over to the next meeting.

PGCA506 Update from Assembly [s]

MG explained that assembly went well and was quorate. Discussion included events, strikes and the importance of multiculturalism and representation.

PGCA507 UCU Strike working group update

LM explained that 04/12/19 was the final day of strikes and would be capped off by a rally in Earlham Park. Invited committee members to attend. Thanked SA and other officers for supporting the strikes.

Explained that UCU will now enter into ASOS (Actions Short of Strike) and explained that this will go on until the 29th of April 2020 or until there is an agreement. Highlighted that UCU are balloting again over concerns on pay.

MM queried the nature of ASOS and if this would lead to pay deductions.

LM clarified that staff could stand to have wages docked if they are perceived to not be meeting the stipulations of their contract.

AP further sought clarity about how contracts work and how only working to this could be an issue.

JM explained that workload models mean that staff are expected to work to a certain level, and if they don't meet that they can have their pay docked. Further commented that most of this expectation is around rescheduling teaching hours.

MG highlighted that Associate Tutors are not paid for answering emails and corresponding with students, but are expected to do to unwritten clauses in their contracts. Following ASOS guidelines could mean not answering emails etc.

LM explained how workload models at UEA expect a minimum level of 90% on top of their contract, and that this is common industry wide.

SA explained that the UEA branch of UCU are proposing a motion to the USS/UCU conference that would allow for an academic boycott in the result of 100% pay deductions.

MM queried what actions the union can be taken to support staff who may face pay deductions.

LM said that this can be talked about in working group, but challenged officers to challenge university staff if these issues arise. Said that closing union house to teaching was well received by UCU, and will be reciprocated by UCU should the union need it.

PGCA508 Martin's Attendance at UCU Picket Lines

Item brought by the Chair of committee.

MG explained the origins of this item – that MM had been mandated to attend the strike picket lines, but has only attended a few of the days for a limited period of time. Challenged MM to justify his actions.

MM defended himself by saying that his interpretation was that he was not expected to attend the picket line at all hours, and that he perceived that he did not need to be in attendance if he was preparing for meetings.

MP argued that general workload is not an excuse for not going to the picket line.

MG clarified that attending the picket lines is work. It is representational and of symbolic and practical importance. MG stressed the importance of this and queried why the committee should not censure MM.

LM highlighted that his interpretation is that MM should have attended significantly more, just as they had done for free. Expressed his anger at MM's poor attendance and that members of the picket had thought that they were MM. Mentioned that this workload in combination with other stresses had had a negative impact on their mental health. Questioned whether MM actually cares.

MM responded that he cares, but perceives a need to balance his workload and expressed a lack of willingness to focus on one issue at a time.

MG retorted that he does not seek to diminish the actions of officers and that they can do an immense amount of good work. Stated that he does not believe that MM understands his job role. Asked what issues over the previous weeks had taken precedence over the strike action. Asked MM to clarify what he saw his job role as in regard to the strikes. Requested that MM release his calendar to the committee so that they can see where he has been when not at the picket line.

Action: MM to release his calendar and engagements to the committee in order to inform committee of his whereabouts during the UCU strikes.

MM replied that he saw his duty as to support the strikes through attendance of the picket lines, through supporting the working group as well as participating in this committee and SOC.

MG requested that MM inform the committee of what other actions he has undertaken and what other meetings he has attended in regard to the strike action.

MM responded that he had organised no other meetings.

SA ran through a list of things that herself and other officers had done during the strikes to see if MM could have contributed more. These included providing food and drink for striking staff members, ensuring that lost wages would be put back into student wellbeing, providing storage, communicating with students amongst others. Additionally credited LM for his work.

MM responded that he had not been actioned to do anything in regard to the strikes and as a result had not.

BP deemed this to be unacceptable and expressed a belief that MM needs to take the initiative more to represent the PG committee.

MM conceded that this was correct. Stated that he did not seek out opportunities to take on actions as other members were taking on that responsibility.

MP expressed a view that this was unacceptable and that MM should not wait to be told what to do. Highlighted that SA was on holiday through the strike period and she still managed to provide support.

BG reminded MM that he was mandated by policy in addition to the actions of this committee.

BP requested MM inform the committee of how he intended to change going forward.

BG requested that MM update Union Council on this issue and his actions going onwards. Apologised if emotions had run high, but reminded MM that he needed to make a conscious effort to rebuild trust between the SU, PG community and UCU.

LM requested that MM remove a line from his report concerning his attendance at the UCU pickets.

BP reminded MM that this is his job and that MM is representative of postgraduate education, and was specifically asked to attend the picket lines.

MG explained that other officers have gone out of the way to lead on issues, while MM has not. Reiterated that there is a considerable weight of feeling inside and outside of the room.

MM accepted that members are disappointed with him and sought suggestions in regard to how he can improve.

PGCA509 Sky House working group update

AT explained the discussions that had taken part in the working group. These include compiling a list of concerns, lobbying for a dedicated PGR space, maintaining numbers of desks, securing a separate PGR kitchen space and others. It was also mentioned that the Courage Project should be considered as a matter of importance.

PGCA510 Winter Events

BG mentioned the events that were run last year, but noted that as the events budget was smaller, these might need to be amended accordingly.

JM explained that these events occur in the period between semester ending and starting again in January, and that committee will have enough funds to afford to put these events on.

SA stated that ice skating was received well in the past.

AP queried whether it would be beneficial to charge a nominal fee for more expensive events.

BP stated that Christmas is an expensive time of year regardless and as such PG|SU should seek to minimise expenses where possible.

MG set the budget for events at approximately £1000.

AT reminded everyone of the importance of keeping the events accessible and inclusive.

JM mentioned that it was worthwhile checking that the ice skating rink

GK raised that Castle Quarter's ice rink will not be open this year so this won't be able to be done.

AP volunteered to collate a list of events that are on in Norwich over the Christmas period, but aren't run directly by the SU.

Action: AP to collate list of events that are being run in Norwich over the Christmas period.

BP raised concerns over the naming of the 'ale trail' and it could be perceived to encourage drinking, which runs against the Union's goals of encouraging non-drinking social events. Wanted to prevent people feeling pressured to drink.

AP raised the idea of going to the ski slopes near Norwich for a suitably festive event.

JM clarified that at this place they offer various options that could be suitable.

SA stated that it is £13 per person for 'tubing' at this venue – and up to 20 people can participate.

Action: AP to liaise with the ski venue in regard to arranging prices etc.

BG considered ways to make the 'winter party' cheaper – it was agreed that buying soft drinks and pizza would limit the costs to ~£200.

SA read out the events organised by the SU which have been arranged for the Christmas break.

~£100 was agreed on as headroom in case of cost overruns.

The events agreed upon are – Christmas Tea & Cake, 'Chris Cringle Seasonal Mingle', Winter Party, Christmas Tea, Cake and Biscuit Decorating and Tubing.

PGCA511 Doctoral College Annual Report

MM introduced the report, and explained that it introduces what the doctoral college have been doing in the past year. Explained what the College does, and how it feeds into the policy making process.

BG requested that everyone read the report over the coming weeks and months.

MM reminded everyone that the College is opaque, and that students cannot get involved in the creation of the agenda.

Action: MM to endeavour to reform the Doctoral College so that PGC can have some input.

PGCA512 NUS Postgraduate Report

BG asked MM to inform the committee in the future if he intends to add long items to the appendix, so that committee members have enough time to read them.

Action: Committee to read NUS PG Report before next meeting to inform discussion.

PGCA513 Supervisor CPD

Item brought by M Marko.

MM introduced the item, informing committee that this was designed to start a conversation in regard to training, and what this should look like.

LM stated that this could be done in conjunction with UCU – to see what they perceive to be important in this area.

SA reminded everyone that this might not need to go to council, or before it does we should check to ensure that similar policies do not already exist.

JM informed committee that in regard to this item, a reply was wanted/expected soon, and as such forming a working group or going through Union Council may take too much time.

BG clarified the training that is currently offered and summarised that this campaign should have two strands – one for PGR's and one for PGT students.

MM voiced concerns over the potential division of labour between education committee and postgraduate committee.

AP raised the idea of coordinating the two committees.

BG concluded that this should go to SOC to coordinate between these two committees.

Action: BG, LM, MP, MM, GK & SA to form working group to begin process of evaluating and considering supervisor CPD.

PGCA514 AOB

LM raised that the fact that Thursday 5th December is Union Council and invited committee members to attend – reiterated that this is of importance as policy lapse is scheduled for the meeting.

SA briefly explained policy lapse and why is it important for the union to periodically conduct a review like this.

LM reiterated the need to keep policies in regard to supporting UCU strikes and ASOS in case of further action.

Committee indicated that they were willing to fund mince pies for a PG quiz.

MG raised a conversation he had with a former PGC member in regard to changing the two week window for Social Grant applications. Explained that the two week window is in place to give PGC adequate time to approve any funding etc.

Committee expressed a lack of desire to change this window.

MG raised that a student wanted to explore the possibility of a postgraduate ball, and that he would elaborate on this in teams.

MG further encouraged members to join the SU buddy scheme, as a dedicated PG role was open in the scheme. Wished members a good Christmas break.

PGCA515 Time date and place of next meeting

22nd of January at 5:15pm in Bookable Rooms 7/8.

AP Number	Date Commissioned	Action Required	Assigned To:	Date to be actioned by:
102	12/11/19	Explore the possibility of submitting a funding request for activities to SOC.	LM, SA & MG	22/01/20
103	12/11/19	Continue the process of pressuring UEA Sport to fund PG activities and feedback accordingly.	AP & MM	22/01/20
104	12/11/19	To collate all the separate information around school and faculty funding for conferences.	MM	22/01/20
107	12/11/19	Discuss the possibility of reserving conference funding for certain groups of students.	MG, MM, AT & JM	22/01/20
108	12/11/19	To provide explanation of Big Shift Big Day through Teams	MM	22/01/20
109	12/11/19	Members to feed back on the progress of the UCU Strike Working Group	MG, LM, SA, MM	Ongoing - 22/01/20
110	12/11/19	Members to feed back on the progress of the Sky House Working Group	MP, LM, BP, MG, SA, AT & MM	Ongoing - 22/01/20

111	03/12/19	AP to attend BUCS conference and feedback in regard to PG Sport.	AP	22/01/20
112	03/12/19	To liaise with staff support in regard to collecting and collating information in regard to applying for conference funding.	MM	22/01/20
113	03/12/19	To liaise with other members to arrange time and place to take AP 107 forward	MG	22/01/20
114	03/12/19	MM to release his calendar and engagements to the committee to explain his whereabouts during the UCU strikes.	MM	22/01/20
115	03/12/19	AP to collate list of events that are being run in Norwich over the Christmas period.	AP	22/01/20
116	03/12/19	AP to liaise with ski venue in regard to prices etc.	AP	22/01/20
117	03/12/19	Endeavour to reform Doctoral College so that PGC can have some input.	MM	22/01/20

118	03/12/19	Committee to read NUS PG Report before next meeting in order to inform discussion.	All Members	22/01/20
119	03/12/19	Form working group to begin process of discussing and evaluating supervisor CPD.	BG, LM, MP, MM, GK & SA	22/01/20