

Meeting 11/2021

A meeting of the **Monash Graduate Association (MGA) Executive Committee** was held from 6.00pm – 7.00pm, Thursday 16 December 2021, by zoom.

MINUTES

1. Formal matters

1.1 Acknowledgement of country

The MGAEC acknowledged and paid respect to the people of the Kulin nations as the original and ongoing owners and custodians of this unceded land.

1.2 Attendance

Present Caitlyn Neale (Chair), Arjun Sanjeev, Nathalie Farah, Elnaz Mokhtari, Maddie Herath, David Nash, Karyn Low, Yingheng Tan, Philip Kairns, Deven Kumar.

Apologies Merve O’Keefe

Observers Feng Lin, Amir Abyaneh, Anumanthram Senthilkumar, Ketki Kawale, Melinda Krebsz

In attendance Jenny Reeder, Zuzana Quinn

1.3 Consideration of the agenda

No items were added.

2. Minutes and Action sheet

2.1 Minutes 10/2021 for confirmation

There were no corrections to the minutes.

It was moved:

That the minutes of MGAEC meeting 9/2021 November be confirmed.

Moved: Maddie Herath

Seconded: Arjun Sanjeev

Carried.

2.2 Action sheet

Noted.

3. Reports

3.1 President’s report

Noted.

3.2 Members’ reports

Noted.

3.3 Staff report

Noted.

3.4 November 2021 profit and loss report

Noted.

3.5 MGAEC meeting attendance records

Noted.

4. Business

4.1 Business arising

4.1.1 Email motions: minutes; childcare grant; budget adjustments; and debit card holder

The committee noted that four motions from meeting November 10/2021 were voted on by email. Nine members took part in the voting process. and all motions were carried as at 2 December, 2021.

1. Minutes

That the minutes of MGAEC meeting November 09/2021 be confirmed.

Moved: Chair

Carried.

2. Childcare grant

That a maximum of \$500,000 be allocated to the MGA childcare grant program for 2021.

Moved: Chair

Carried.

3. Budget Adjustments

That the budget adjustments set out in attachment 4.2.2 be approved.

Moved: Chair

Carried.

4. Debit card for staff

That the MGAEC approve the issuing of a debit card operating from the MGA account to the Student Engagement Officer.

Moved: Chair

Carried.

4.1.2 Childcare grants for HDR students

The committee was informed that information and an application form for the MGA Childcare grant was distributed via faculties to all HDR students. The grant had in part been created to counteract the inherent bias against carers (primarily women) in the GRCA eligibility rules which disallowed applications from candidates over the four year mark, the very group who were likely to have needed additional time due to childcare responsibilities and home-schooling.

Over 160 applications had been received for the MGA Childcare grant to date, and it was clear from applicants' email comments that students were extremely grateful for the gesture and support. The application period closed 16 December 2021 and it was intended that all payment transfers would be made prior to university close-down.

The committee requested that statistics on the final distribution of funds be reported back to the committee.

4.1.3 MGA Bank account transfer

Following on from the 2021 decision to move the MGA bank accounts to a more ethical bank that among other concerns, did not invest in fossil fuels, the following motion was moved:

That the MGA becomes a customer of, and opens accounts with Bank Australia. The signatories to all bank accounts, shall be as set out in the accompanying attachment.

Moved: David Nash
Seconded: Nathalie Farah
Carried.

4.2 General Business

4.2.1 MGA 2022 budget

The draft MGA budget for 2022 was presented to the committee for approval. The committee discussed the details of the budget and the Executive Officer answered several questions from committee members.

It was moved:

That the draft MGA 2022 budget be accepted.

Moved: Karyn Low
Seconder: Maddie Herath
Carried.

4.2.2 PPA incoming committee for 2022

The results of the PPA 2022 committee were announced and David Nash was congratulated by committee members on being re-elected to the MGA representative position. The PPA committee details were:

POSITION	2022
President	Narges Mahdavian (DDB)
Vice President	Nimna Perara (DDB)
Treasurer	Annabel Manoleras (DDB)
Secretary	Abhipree Sharma (DDB)
Education/Careers Officer	Celine Hung (D4) Jessica Huang (D4) Shin Liau (CMUS)
Wellbeing, Diversity and Inclusion	Ting Fu (DDB)
Marketing/Communications	Anna Nguyen (D4)
MGA Representative	David Nash (DDB)
Social Events	Liam Hales (Med Chem)

	Annie Roys (D4) Bryce Barber (D4)
OHS Representative	Bryce Barber (D4)
Sports Officer	VACANT
Honours Representative	VACANT
First-year Representative	VACANT
Interns Representative	VACANT

4.2.3 Coursework degree fee increases

The committee discussed the university's recent decision to increase coursework fees by 6%. It was felt that this was a very poor decision coming on the back of the pandemic where many students had lost their income from casual work and were still suffering financially.

The following points were made:

- Graduate students in particular were being charged extremely high course fees to begin with;
- The quality of the courses delivered during the pandemic had been sub-optimal;
- Students were paying full fees for courses without access to labs and essential equipment and without engaging educational experiences;
- Students were paying full fees for facilities they could not access;
- The university had not made any financial concessions for the fact that they were not delivering the course for which students had enrolled and paid, despite repeated lobbying from the MGA for a reduction in fees;
- Many graduate students had lost their casual jobs and were in financial distress.

It was against this background that the fee increases were imposed. Monash's increase was almost double that of other major universities, with University of Sydney at 3.8% and University of Melbourne at 3.2%. It was reported that Victoria University had reduced fees by 30% in acknowledgement of the financial hardships being suffered by students. The committee felt that this action by Monash University sent a message to the student community that the university simply did not care about them.

The committee directed the MGA President to write to the Vice-Chancellor about this matter in the first instance.

4.2.4 Orientation planner for Semester one, 2022

The committee noted the planner for MGA's orientation activities for semester one, 2022, and thanked events staff and committee members who had worked on developing a very creative program under trying conditions.

5. Membership

Seven applications for cooption to the vacant MGAEC positions had been received. Those candidates present at the meeting as observers were invited to speak to their applications.

The committee considered the candidates in light of the current balance of gender, faculty and course mode on the committee membership, as well as candidates' willingness to take up vacant office-bearer positions. It was decided to hold a vote via email at a later date so that the full committee could participate in voting for new members.

6. Next meeting

It was agreed the next meeting would be held in February 2022 at a time and date to be confirmed. The meeting closed at 7.23pm.