

Meeting 01/2021

A meeting of the **Monash Graduate Association (MGA) Executive Committee**
was held from 4.00pm – 5.30pm, Thursday 11 February 2021
by Zoom invitation.

MINUTES

The meeting opened at 4.05pm.

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), Stacey Coe, Julie Dao, Jessica Lu, Suhag Arun, Emily Pryor, Ailsa Webb, Roby Vota, Aman Madaan, Sam Miles, Hang Yu, Emma Kellaway, Elliot Andreson
Apologies	Preeti Mehta
In attendance	Janice Boey, Jenny Reeder, Zuzana Quinn, Ying Xu, James Breheny, Zakaria Mani, Merve O’Keefe, Zhe Shi.

1.3 Consideration of the agenda

No items were added.

2. Minutes and Action sheet

2.1 Minutes 11/2020 for confirmation

It was moved:

That the minutes of MGAEC meeting December 11/2020 be confirmed.

Moved: Ailsa

Seconded: Suhag

Carried.

2.2 Action sheet

Noted.

3. Reports

All written submitted reports were noted. In addition:

3.1 President’s report

Caitlyn informed members that she, Ailsa and Preeti had met with Kris Ryan and would prepare further information to substantiate the complaints the MGA had received about e-exams, which included technical issues and the narrow scope in the terms for applying for special consideration. Caitlyn invited the committee to raise with her any other concerns they had received from students. The MGA paper would be sent to a working group, recently formed by Kris Ryan. There had been no commitment made by the university to making changes in time for the next round of exams. Ailsa gave anecdotes from Law and IT but invited feedback from other faculties. Caitlyn agreed to inquire about the membership of the working group, in order to ensure that graduate students were represented.

Caitlyn also announced that having made several unsuccessful attempts to negotiate with the MSA over the amount of graduate funding to be transferred to them, she had now requested that the matter be heard under the university's new dispute resolution process. The MGA was satisfied that this time round the university dispute resolution process would be open, transparent and fair, and the MGA committed to comply with the outcome, regardless of whether or not the committee agreed with the transfer amount determined by the arbitrator.

3.2 Members' reports

Emily reported that she and Sam were hoping to receive feedback from the MGAEC about the proposal to pursue an HDR stipend increase. The University of Melbourne stipend (currently \$31,500) was consistently higher than the Monash University stipend rate (currently \$29,500), resulting in the University of Melbourne being more attractive to prospective HDR students. Monash's rate was slightly below the G08 average. The committee discussed the matter and decided that the scholarship rate was only one factor affecting the financial situations of HDRs, with other factors such as access to income through tutoring opportunities being frequently raised by students. Emily agreed to collate publicly available data, as well as data from the MGA finance survey and individual case studies, to put together an argument for increased stipends and other financial opportunities.

Sam encouraged members to take the opportunity to sit as panel members on APC panels. Zuzana noted that while some faculties wanted coursework graduates on their APC panels, both research and coursework student panel members were required for discipline panels, and she would offer these places to interested committee members. This year the panels were likely to be a mixture of zoom and face-to-face, and would usually be conducted on Clayton campus.

Suhag reported that he had unsuccessfully stood for MIISON President. He had spoken to the relevant university administrative unit about the fact that the Clayton undergraduate candidate had held the President's position for several years now and was concerned that there had been no representation from graduates or from undergraduates on other campuses in the MIISON President position.

Julie noted that she would speak to her report under item 4.2.2 Social media.

Roby inquired about access to the OB budget and the possibility of running social events on campus. It was noted that there were funds available for office-bearers to run events and that these could go ahead provided they complied with the current COVID restrictions in place.

3.3 Staff report

Noted.

3.4 December 2020 profit and loss report

Noted. Members were informed that the external auditors would commence the annual audit next week and a draft audit report would be presented to the committee at the April meeting.

3.5 MGAEC meeting attendance records

Noted. Emily requested that the meeting attendance records be corrected to show that she had submitted a report for December.

3.6 CAPA President report

Attachment 3.6

Errol spoke briefly about CAPA and its representative role in working with federal government. The CAPA executive planned to work on a number of issues this year including: additional funding for universities; additional research funding for universities; ensuring any internships undertaken by graduate students are paid internships; increasing the amount of SSAF going to student associations (some get as low as 10% and some as high as 50%); and international student issues such as underpayment in jobs internal and external to the university.

In relation to the discussion about increasing HDR stipends, Errol noted that an alternative way to achieve this was to lobby the federal government to raise the minimum stipend payment; a directive with which all universities would then have to comply.

4. Business

4.1 Business arising

4.1.1 Motion by email on budget adjustments

Noted.

4.1.2 Motion by email on PPA signatories

Noted.

4.1.3 Sexual misconduct cases

Further to the discussion held in the February MGAEC meeting on the topic of advocacy support to survivors/victims and alleged perpetrators of sexual misconduct, and the concern that MGA records could be subpoenaed and used against a student in future criminal proceedings, the committee agreed that:

- it is important to support students and the MGA advocacy service will continue to provide the usual support and advice for both survivors/victims and alleged perpetrators of sexual assault; and
- if a meeting is held for a survivor/victim to meet with Safer Communities Unit the advocate may attend with the student (at the student's request) but will not keep a written record of the meeting; and
- if a discipline hearing is held for an alleged perpetrator the advocate may attend with the student (at the student's request) but will not keep a written record of the hearing; and
- survivors/victims will be advised by advocates that they should contact the police; and
- both survivors/victims and alleged perpetrators will be advised by advocates that they should seek expert legal advice; and
- the MGA will lobby the university to pay for an external legally qualified practitioner to attend discipline hearings with alleged perpetrators.

4.2 General Business – 4.50pm

4.2.1 MGAEC meetings for 2021

It was proposed that MGAEC meetings continued by zoom exclusively in 2021 for the following reasons:

- during 2020 the MGAEC had achieved a consistently high attendance rate for zoom meetings;
- zoom meetings supported members located on Parkville, Peninsula campuses and those at off-campus sites who would otherwise have had to travel to attend most meetings;
- those members who had work commitments were more easily able to fit meetings in with their work schedules;
- online meetings required less time as travel time was eliminated;
- online meetings established a certain equity when all parties were online, as opposed to a hybrid model where only some members were online.

In recognition that socialising between committee members was an important part of working well together, it was agreed that regular non-compulsory social sessions would be run for members to attend in person.

4.2.2 Social Media Regulations

Julie noted that she often received questions from students about the MGA and was always promoting the MGA to new students. It was suggested that MGAEC committee members become more involved in the social media produced by the MGA. Julie explained that it was important for students to hear the student voice and to know who MGAEC were and what the MGA was doing. The proposal was to set up a roster for committee members to provide content for a social media plan. The posts would all be made through the generic MGA accounts, not students' personal accounts. Julie said the working group felt that more student-created content would help to put out the message that MGA is a student-run organisation. It was agreed that the social media roster would be decided via a discussion between members on the whatsapp group.

The social media regulations had recently been updated and were provided for members' approval.

It was moved:

That the revised Social Media regulations be adopted.

Moved: Ailsa

Seconded: Elliot

Carried.

4.2.3 MGA Orientation activities Semester 1, 2021

Members were advised of the schedule of MGA-run events running during orientation week and pre-orientation week on all campuses and were encouraged to attend as many events as possible.

5. Membership

It was announced that a resignation had been received from Mazaya Abidin, Peninsula Campus Representative, who was stranded in Indonesia and unable to return to Australia. Mazaya had chosen to resign as she felt that she was unable to properly fulfil the duties of the position while overseas. The vacant position had subsequently been advertised.

One written application for cooption to the Peninsula Campus Representative position was received and considered. The applicant was interviewed by the committee. The committee was concerned that the applicant had not provided enough information on which to make an informed decision. It was decided to readvertise the position but the current applicant was invited to re-apply including further information to his application.

Two applications for cooption to the Women's Officer position were received. Both applicants were invited to speak briefly to their submissions. The committee discussed and voted on the two candidates. Merve O'Keefe was declared elected to the position of Women's Officer, and congratulated by the committee.

All observers were asked to leave the meeting for the following items:

6. Other business

6.1 CAPA payment

Jess excused herself from the following discussion and decision, declaring a potential conflict of interest given her position on the CAPA advisory board.

It was explained that the MGA paid an affiliation fee to CAPA each year, based on the number of graduate students enrolled. The MGA payment has grown as the graduate student population had grown. Last year the committee decided to place a \$35,000 cap on the amount of money paid to CAPA. It was felt that because CAPA was primarily a representative body (and not delivering on-the-ground services) the cost of lobbying on a specific issue did not increase with increases in the number of students being represented. It also became apparent that much of CAPA's business could be successfully conducted by zoom, thereby reducing costs.

The charge levied this year was \$46,554. It was agreed that the MGA apply for a fee discount to bring the payment down to \$35,000. It was also agreed that the CAPA payment would be held over to late March, when it would be clearer what the MGA income for 2021 would be.

6.2 MGA staffing

This discussion was held in camera as it pertained to a confidential staff proposal.

7. Next meeting

It was confirmed that the next meeting of the MGAEC would be in combination with the MGA Council meeting and held by zoom on Thursday 11 March, from 4pm – 5.30pm.