

Meeting 01/2023

A meeting of the **Monash Graduate Association (MGA) Executive Committee** was held from 1.00pm – 3.00pm, Friday 10 February 2023, in B01 meeting room, 24 Sports Walk, Clayton campus and 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: Radhik Rammohan (Chair), Saham Hettiarachchi, Ken Chiu Michael Lin, Anumanth Senthilkumar, Annie Roys, Sarah May, Phil Kairns, Maria Lammerding, Maggie Gendy, Sonia Daga, Rose Huang (to item 4.2.4).

Apologies: Lily Wen

In attendance: Jenny Reeder, Executive Officer
Jessica Fimmel, HR and Finance Manager,
Janice Boey, Student Engagement Manager

1.3 Consideration of the agenda

No items were added.

2. Minutes and Action sheet

2.1 Minutes of meetings 12/2022 for confirmation

It was moved:

That the minutes of MGAEC meeting December 12/2022 be confirmed.

Moved: Saham Hettiarachchi

Seconded: Anumanth Senthilkumar

Carried.

2.2 Action sheet

Sonia informed members that the monthly events for coursework students had not yet started. All other MGAEC initiatives were in progress.

3. Reports

3.1 President's report

The President's report was noted. In addition, Radhik noted that orientation activities started in two weeks and encouraged members to be involved. Jan called for help specifically with the orientation panel and Grad village on Caulfield campus.

3.2 Members' reports

Members' reports were noted.

Sarah asked about the budget for committee-run events. It was explained that there was a single budget from which members could draw funds to run events.

Radhik raised a concern that some EC members were not running events, and asked how the committee could help under-performing members to run at least one event per semester. Phil and Sarah suggested that instead of concentrating on just events as the only way to contribute, the discussion be broadened to "activity" to encompass non-social activities such as providing feedback on a policy, or running a survey. The committee agreed to this definition. Radhik pointed out that the committee had a responsibility to ensure that the SSAF money was spent in the year it was received so that the students who had paid it would benefit.

Anumanth inquired about MGA staff conditions. It was explained that staff conditions were governed by an Enterprise Agreement and were inducive to staff retention. In addition, there were various initiatives to encourage staff to stay fit and healthy, as well as opportunities and support for the staff to undertake professional development. Anumanth expressed concern over the conditions for staff working with CAPA and it was agreed that he could seek more details about staff conditions from the Executive Officer.

3.3 Staff report

Noted.

3.4 December 2022 profit and loss report

Noted.

3.5 MGAEC meeting attendance records

Noted.

4. Business

4.1 Business arising

4.1.1 Bank Australia accounts

Members were reminded to verify their identities with Bank Australia to allow the MGA to complete the transfer of bank accounts from Westpac to Bank Australia. A concern was raised that the ID requirements for international students were onerous and, depending on individual circumstances, could not be completed online. Some members had encountered difficulty being identified, as a passport was not enough; a second photo ID was required and a university student card was not acceptable. This left few options for those who did not have a driver's licence. Radhik offered to organise transport into the city to attend the bank in person, for those who were having difficulty.

4.1.2 HDR Thrive portal completion

It was announced that the HDR THRIVE portal that had been developed by Professor Kim Cornish and her research team in conjunction with the MGA, was now live and could be accessed here:

<https://www.monash.edu/thrive/hdr>

The site had used much of the data and findings from MGA's surveys, as well as incorporating case studies from the MGA advocacy team.

Members were encouraged to spread the word about this new website. The MGA would work closely with Kim's research team to promote the portal to the HDR student community.

4.1.3 Email vote on financial motions

Members noted a vote that had been carried out by email after the December meeting to update the signatories to the MGA bank account for Parkville, in line with the recently elected PPA committee. A second motion requested access to a debit card for an events staff member. Nine members took part in the voting process and both motions were carried unanimously as at 22 December, 2022.

4.2 General Business

4.2.1 CEME funding

The committee were informed that the Campus Experience and Major Events (CEME) division of Monash University would provide funding to each of the student associations to put towards running their orientation programs and other major events. The MGA would receive:

- \$10,000 towards Clayton Semester 1 Grad Carnival at Orientation
- \$10,000 towards Caulfield Semester 1 Grad Carnival at Orientation
- \$10,000 for a Semester 1 event (MGA to run a Melbourne Aquarium event in April)
- \$10,000 for a Semester 2 event (MGA to run a Melbourne Zoo event in September)

The committee approved the necessary adjustments to the MGA 2023 Budget to reflect this additional income and expenditure.

4.2.2 Mental health program proposal

It was noted that the MGA was proposing to work with the Clayton counselling service to trial a number of projects relating to mental health:

1. A workshop on developing a mental health care plan pitched to HDRs at the start of their candidature.
2. A trial research project with a small group of HDR students who have had a personal session with a counsellor and developed a mental health care plan, and are tracked over the course of their candidature.
3. The establishment of a graduate student mental health champion network; two HDR students in each faculty who have been trained in mental health first aid and are expected to promote good practice in looking after one's mental health, run events on mental health awareness days and act as a first-port-of-call for graduate students in their faculty with mental health concerns (with the aim of directing those students to counselling).

Interested members were invited to contact the Executive Officer. Sarah expressed interest.

4.2.3 MGA Enterprise Agreement approved

The process of negotiating a new Enterprise Agreement (EA) to govern staff conditions, which had commenced in March 2022 with the previous MGAEC committee, had now concluded with a new EA being approved by the Fairwork Commission on 23 January 2023. The new EA would cover the period from January 2023 to January 2026.

4.2.4 Clayton to Caulfield shuttle bus

At a recent meeting with BPD it was explained that the shuttle bus run between Clayton and Caulfield campus was under review and one option was to stop the service altogether. The reasons given were that this route was already serviced by existing public transport, user numbers were down according to a 2022 survey, petrol buses were a significant contributor to university emissions and the wait time on purchasing electric buses was 7 years.

The MGA argued that students really valued this service and relied on it to continue. With the graduate student cohort already in financial distress, many could not afford to pay full fare public transport costs to regularly transfer between Clayton and Caulfield campuses. Many students lived in Clayton campus accommodation but needed to access Caulfield campus for their courses. It was requested by the MGA that the user numbers be reviewed again by BPD at the end of semester one this year, given overall 2022 student numbers were still low due to Covid.

BPD informed MGA representatives that they would consult with other bodies around the university before making any decision. There was strong support within the MGAEC for the shuttle bus to continue, and a willingness to take action should BPD decide to significantly reduce the shuttle runs or close the service down.

4.2.5 MGA Election regulations

Several changes to the 2023 MGAEC election process were proposed:

1. That the directive of clause 17.3 in the constitution be enacted via the election regulations; and
2. That the ballots for the Campus-tagged positions and the General Representative positions be run simultaneously this year, to encourage a higher overall participation rate in the elections.

The MGA Election regulations had been updated accordingly and were presented in tracked change for the committee's approval. The committee agreed to the Campus-tagged positions and the General Representative positions elections being run simultaneously. There was a long discussion on the proposal to impose a 50% minimum women members on the make-up of the MGAEC. As the committee could not come to a concensus, the matter was put to a vote and the amendments to the election regulations were carried.

It was moved:

That the amendments to the election regulations be approved.

Moved: Phil Kairns

Second: Maria Lammerding

For: 7

Against: 4

Abstain: 1

Carried.

4.2.6 Digital ID cards

The MGA had recently been informed that as at semester one this year, all newly enrolling students and newly appointed staff would receive a digital ID card rather than a physical card. The card could be loaded onto a phone or smart watch and would be compatible with phones as old as iPhone 6. Current staff and currently enrolled students would have the option to swap to a digital card. Once a digital card was obtained, the physical card would be decommissioned. If there were students whose phones did not accommodate the digital card, they could apply to have a physical card issued. Phones did not need to have an app open or even be out of sleep mode in order for the digital card reader to work. The card would work in the same way as a physical card in terms of printer access and swipe access to rooms. The card would not have a barcode, which would instead be available through a separate Monash app.

As there had not been consultation with any of the student associations prior to this decision being implemented, the MGA, along with its graduate groups, would need to make some adjustments to its own operations.

Discussions were underway about:

- the ability to apply a digital sticker on the card (a replacement for the MGA rewards stickers which were currently in physical form), which eSolutions had indicated was possible; and
- a request to identify graduates from undergraduates via the card, to which eSolutions had responded that there was only one field left available on the card and the current thinking was to use this to identify a student's faculty.

There was some discussion about the matter, in summary:

- What if phones died? There may be a need to have more charging stations (and connections) located near swipe entries.
- Phones were currently not allowed in exam halls, but students would now need them to swipe in to the exam building – how would this be handled?
- Using NFC was concerning for some people, regarding security and identity theft.

5. Membership matters

No business.

6. Next meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held in March at a date and time to be confirmed by committee members. Radhik asked members to respond quickly to the call for availability so that the date could be set with more notice. Annie requested that Radhik send out the call for availability earlier and this was agreed to.

The meeting closed at 2.41pm.