

Meeting 06/2021

A meeting of the **Monash Graduate Association (MGA) Executive Committee** was held from 2.30pm – 4.00pm, Monday 30 July 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, Priyanka Nathani, David Nash, Karyn Low, Pranay Prathivadi, Elnaz Mokhtari, Deven Kumar, Maddie Herath, Elliot Anderson, Yingheng Tan
Apologies	No apologies received.
In attendance	Janice Boey, Jenny Reeder, Zuzana Quinn, Jessica Fimmel

1.3 Consideration of the agenda

Caitlyn invited additional items for the agenda. Nathalie added an item to the agenda: 4.2.4 Public transport concession for graduate students.

2. Minutes and Action sheet

2.1 Minutes 05/2021 for confirmation

It was moved:

That the minutes of MGAEC meeting June 05/2021 be confirmed.

Moved: Arjun Sanjeev

Seconded: Karyn Low

Carried.

2.2 Action sheet

The action sheet was noted.

3. Reports

3.1 President's report

Noted.

3.2 Members' reports

All tabled reports were noted.

Deven stated that he planned to contact CISA, as well as other various external international student groups. More information would be brought to the next committee meeting about the possibility of affiliating with these external groups.

Arjun offered to take responsibility for any issues relating to CAPA. Caitlyn briefly explained CAPA's role and how the MGA interacted with them. Caitlyn also explained the fact that the MGA had decided to cap the annual affiliation fees for CAPA and was waiting on a response from them. Caitlyn agreed to keep Arjun informed of any further correspondence between herself and the CAPA President.

3.3 Staff report

Noted. Caitlyn explained how the staff report provided a summary of staff activities and invited any questions.

3.4 June 2021 profit and loss reports

Noted. The Executive Officer gave a brief explanation to new members of how to read the profit and loss report and invited specific questions on the June p&l report. There was a query about using bulk supply stores to reduce the cost of lounge supplies. While this option had been considered in the past and found to be more costly when staff time to collect goods was taken into account, it was agreed that the staff would revisit this option.

3.5 MGAEC meeting attendance records

Noted. Caitlyn noted the meeting attendance records and encouraged members to submit reports for every meeting and where they were unable to attend a meeting, to submit their apologies.

4. Business

4.1 Business arising

4.1.1 Funding agreement with the university

Caitlyn summarised the outcome of funding agreement negotiations. The funding agreement with the university had been signed. Some of the requested changes were granted, for example, the university agreed to: recognise that the MGA may have a complaint against the university not abiding by the funding agreement, and not just the reverse; require student associations to consult not only the university but other student associations, where their intended services duplicated existing services; and recognise the funding agreements the MGA held with two of the undergraduate student associations and not interfere with that transfer of funding. Some of the requested changes were not agreed to, for example, the university insisted that the funding going to the Clayton undergraduate association (MSA-Clayton) would be paid directly to MSA-Clayton without any conditions attached.

The university had also introduced a cap on the level of reserves that could be held by all the student associations. The MGA agreed to the principle that the SSAF, where possible, should be spent in the year in which it was collected, and that student associations should not hold large reserves. However the dramatic drop in SSAF income in 2020 had demonstrated that it was wise to have some reserves on hand to prevent the long term damage such a sharp drop in SSAF income could have on organisations. For 2021-23, the MGA had applied to hold enough money to cover running costs for 6 months, but this had been denied. Concern was expressed about the inequity of the reserves allowed to be maintained by the different student associations, with most other student organisations holding enough in their reserves to be able to operate for 12 months without income. The MGA currently held enough to

operate for 3 months without income. The MGA planned to address this inequity with senior management.

4.1.2 MGAEC office-bearer election results

Held over. While the outcome of the internal office-bearer elections was known and members were now working in their roles, the formal report of the office-bearer elections was held over due to the relevant details of the proceedings being held in hardcopy in the MGA office and subsequently inaccessible due to lockdown.

4.1.3 CISA membership

It was noted that the MGA membership with CISA has been reactivated, as per the MGAEC's decision in the June meeting. CISA had provided satisfactory audited reports for their 2020 finances and had addressed the poor gender balance within the committee.

4.2 General Business

4.2.1 Request for leave from MGAEC

A request for leave from the MGAEC was submitted by Madhuni Herath, who announced she was due to give birth within a few weeks. Maddie was congratulated by the committee.

It was moved:

That the MGAEC grant leave to Madhuni Herath for August and September 2021.

Moved: Elliot Anderson
Seconded: Arjun Sanjeev
Carried.

It was further discussed that the Honoraria regulations allowed for unpaid leave but did not provide for paid maternity leave. The committee discussed the matter and it was proposed that maternity leave be deemed an exception to this rule, so that those members intermitting for the purposes of maternity leave were paid during their period of leave.

It was moved:

That the MGA Honoraria regulations be amended to allow MGAEC members taking intermission for the purposes of maternity leave to be paid during that intermission.

Moved: Nathalie Farah
Seconded: Priyanka Nathani
Carried.

4.2.2 MGA reports and publications

The following reports recently produced by the MGA were noted:

- Parents, Carers and Family report, tabled at the Diversity and Inclusion Committee, the Graduate Research Committee and available online at <https://mga.monash.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Parents-Carers-and-Family-Report.pdf>
- Fact sheets for individual faculties showing retention rates and overall satisfaction for both HDR and GPG cohorts, distributed to all Deans and tabled at the Graduate Research Committee and the Education Committee.
- A Covid edition of “What every good supervisor should know...” distributed to all supervisors via Associate Deans (Graduate Studies).

4.2.3 Connecting with Malaysia campus

It was proposed that an informal mentoring scheme be set up between MGAEC members and MUPA members, MUPA being the graduate student association on Malaysia campus. The MGA had been supporting this group for over 10 years and had an excellent relationship with the graduate student cohort and campus staff. The idea was supported but as there were no volunteers from the committee it was agreed that staff would initially move this project forward.

4.2.4 Public transport concession for graduate students

Nathalie spoke to this item, noting that it was good to hear about the MGA’s draft letter to the Victorian minister requesting that the matter of providing public transport concessions to Victorian graduates be reconsidered. It was widely agreed that the current situation was unfair, where Victorian graduates were the only graduate students in Australia not to receive a public transport concession. Committee members noted that most graduate students studied for 40 hours per week and even those on scholarships were receiving only one third of an average salary but all graduates were required to pay the full adult fare.

Nathalie noted that the MET concession issue was the main reason for her deciding to join the MGAEC and that she was keen to run a campaign. She had been in contact with her local Greens MP who held the transport portfolio and he had expressed interest in working with graduate students on this matter. The Greens MP was willing to submit a question to parliament on the MET concession issue. Nathalie informed members that it was helpful to have a letter from an MP, as well as the letter from the MGA. Nathalie suggested it would be good to also work with other Victorian universities. The MGA 2017 transport concession campaign was discussed and the Executive Officer agreed to send Nathalie all the documentation from the campaign as well as put her in contact with the two ex-MGA Presidents who had worked on that campaign, so that she could take advantage of their experience and hindsight.

5. OB elections and membership

It was noted that Nathalie had emailed members to withdraw her nomination for the role of Vice-President, and that Arjun had therefore been declared elected to the position of Vice-President.

One application had been received from Philip Kairn for the position of Queer Officer. This application was held over due to Philip’s absence.

6. Next meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held in August 2021 at a time and date to be confirmed.