

Meeting 07/2022

A meeting of the **Monash Graduate Association (MGA) Executive Committee** was held from 3.00pm – 5.00pm, Tuesday 26 July 2022, in-person Room 331, LTB, 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), Phil Cairns, Saham Hettiarachchi, Maria Lammerding, Lily Wen, Sarah May, Rose Huang, Maggie Gendy, Anumanth Senthilkumar, Ken Chiu, Michael Lin, Annie Roys
Apologies: Serra D'mello, Sonia Daga
In attendance: Jenny Reeder, Jessica Fimmel, Janice Boey, Zuzana Quinn, James Breheny

1.3 Consideration of the agenda

No items were added.

2. Minutes and Action sheet

2.1 Minutes of meetings 04, 05 and 06/2022 for confirmation

It was moved:

That the minutes of MGAEC meetings 04/2022, 05/2022 and 06/2022 be confirmed.

Moved: Saham Hettiarachchi

Seconded: Anumanth Senthilkumar

Carried.

2.2 Action sheet

Noted.

3. Reports

3.1 President's report

Noted.

3.2 Members' reports

Members' tabled reports were noted and the following additional items were discussed:

Anumanth noted he was working on the PTV concession issue.

Phil reminded members to try to use gender-neutral language when addressing graduate students.

Saham reported that he had helped out with orientation, and thanked events staff for their work over the orientation period. He was also working on parking issues raised by HDR students, who had explained that they had received parking fines under the following two circumstances: when they had been locked out of the parking app because it had crashed; and when they were working overnight and forgot to re-log in after midnight. Saham had written a letter to BPD asking for HDRs to have access to the 28 day permit currently offered to staff. Saham had also attended the HDR monthly social, and was using the opportunity to interact with the HDR cohort to find out what the current issues were.

Maggie had represented the MGA by participating in the university's development of a short video promoting the financial advice and support available to students.

Rose inquired about establishing a family-friendly study room on Clayton campus. It was suggested that the MGA could keep a collection of toys in the MGA Clayton office that could be borrowed out by graduate student parents to use in one of the MGA meeting rooms in the Clayton Campus Centre MGA graduate lounge, temporarily transforming the room into a family-friendly study room for the duration of the student's study period. Rose also suggested creating a Parent's Officer role. Rose noted that she was already coordinating a large parenting group of approximately 80 students on Clayton campus. Janice proposed that she contact Rose and Ken about restarting the parents' group on Clayton campus.

Lily suggested that the MGA run a cultural festival event where students shared traditional food, and taught other how to cook traditional food.

Lily also proposed creating a Sustainability Officer position. Radhik requested that the proposals to create the two office-bearer roles relating to sustainability and family be devolved to subcommittees to work out the details and bring the proposals back to the MGAEC. Jessica informed members that there were two existing staff-run green impact groups and that MGAEC members were welcome to join. Lily and Anumanth expressed interest, and agreed to meet with Jessica to decide how best to support the MGA pursuing sustainable options.

Michael reported that he would like to make a video of the group by filming at some of the major events such as the retreat and graduate ball, to promote the MGA and its services. It was agreed, subject to all members being given the opportunity to opt out if they did not wish to be filmed.

Ken reported that he had helped out with the orientation hub and had met lots of new graduate students through the process. Ken had participated as a student panellist in the orientation session and many students had approached him after the session seeking advice about career paths. Ken announced he would like to work with Rose to develop ideas for, and the implementation of, family support activities.

Maria re-iterated Phil's comments about gender-neutral language and emphasised how hurtful it can be for people to be misgendered, suggesting that this training be integrated into the retreat. Maria raised concerns about the MGA's lack of visibility and students' lack of

understanding of what the MGA does. She volunteered to work on the PTV concession campaign, as well as create more resources for international students. Maria also suggested that any office-bearer role created to focus on support for students with children, should be referred to as a Family Officer to include those with broader carer roles.

Annie reported that PPA had been very active and had run a number of events including ice-skating, rock climbing, and a free lunch. She had been regularly attending the PPA monthly meetings. There was a discussion about the MGA care packages that had been distributed to newly arriving students who had been forced to isolate upon arrival, and it was suggested that care packages for students who were isolating due to exposure to Covid could be considered.

Sarah had attended a thesis presentation and spoken with graduate students at the event. Sarah supported the idea of creating a Family Officer position and suggested connecting students who were planning to be parents, with students who were currently parents, to provide an opportunity for sharing experiences. Sarah also proposed running morning teas in the MGA graduate lounge to engage more students.

3.3 Staff report

Noted.

3.4 June 2022 profit and loss report

Noted.

3.5 MGAEC meeting attendance records

Noted.

3.6 MGA Sustainability report

Noted. It was announced that the MGA had lodged its full application for Climate Active certification. Jessica explained that Climate Active was an ongoing partnership between the Australian Government and Australian businesses to drive voluntary climate action, and that Climate Active certification was awarded to businesses and organisations that had credibly reached a state of achieving net zero emissions. As part of this application, the MGA had submitted a carbon inventory of 2021 operations, purchased carbon credits to offset carbon emissions, and set public targets to reduce emissions in the coming years.

The committee thanked Jessica for all her work in preparing the MGA to become a fully carbon-neutral organisation.

4. Business

4.1 Business arising

4.1.1 MGA members' retreat

Maria asked for time to be set aside at the retreat to discuss gender issues, and requested that Phil lead a session. Phil agreed to provide a brief presentation.

4.1.2 Honoraria regulation amendments

It was explained that the Honoraria regulations had been updated to ensure that students excluded from the MGA under Clause 9.3 of the MGA Constitution for non-attendance, had their stipend payment ceased at the start of their period of non-attendance. A tracked change copy of the amendments was tabled.

It was moved:

That the amended Honoraria regulations be accepted.

Moved: Anumanth Senthilkumar

Seconded: Saham Hettiarachchi

Carried.

4.1.3 MGA annual carbon report

The committee noted the final copy of the 2021 annual carbon report for the MGA.

4.1.4 JD online lectures

A response to Caitlyn's letter (asking for JD lecture recordings to be made available to all JD students) was received from DVC(Education) Sharon Pickering requesting that the MGA return to the Law Faculty for a second meeting on the matter. Caitlyn was in the process of arranging a meeting with Law Faculty staff member Associate Dean Education Luke Beck and would report to the MGAEC on the outcome.

4.1.5 Orientation semester 2 report

A report on the MGA's semester 2 orientation activities was tabled. Janice thanked all the members of the MGAEC who came to help out during O-week, noting that their time and hard work was very much appreciated.

4.2 General Business

4.2.1 Education Committee TOR

It was explained that the MGA had raised a number of concerns around the recently modified Terms of Reference (TOR) for the Education Committee, primarily the change to the conditions of the MGA nominee to that committee. A letter had been sent to Education Committee Chair Sharon Pickering outlining in detail the reasons why this change was detrimental to graduate student representation on the committee.

4.2.2 PTV concession campaign

Members were informed that the MGA was working with the University of Melbourne Graduate Student Association (GSA) to revive the PTV transport concession campaign, arguing for all Victorian graduate students to receive a travel concession in line with graduate students in every other state of Australia.

The campaign needed to be pitched to the Victorian State government, as the body that has the authority to make this decision, and it was agreed that with a state election coming up later this year, now was a good time to put some pressure on the state government.

The MGA would coordinate any activity coming from MGAEC members and other Monash University graduate students who comprised the PTV concession lobby group. Interested members were invited to contact amy.barwick@monash.edu to join the lobby group.

A brief discussion was held about ideas for progressing the issue including: media coverage; student protests; an article in Mojo highlighting the work MGA was doing in this area; and approaching the state government.

4.2.3 MGA submission on discipline hearings

The MGA Advocacy team had made a submission to the Student Misconduct Operations Group regarding the role of support persons at student hearings.

4.2.4 HDR petition for stipend increase

The MGA was preparing to lobby the university to increase HDR stipends. A report comparing the stipend increases with the poverty line and minimum wage was in production and would go initially to the Graduate Research Committee (GRC). It was noted that if a public petition was to be established, many international students would be reluctant to sign, mistakenly believing that there would be negative ramifications on them and that their visa status may be threatened. It was agreed that if there were to be a petition it should be private. Saham announced that he would meet with the GRC reps to discuss the committee's concerns.

4.2.5 MGA photoshoot

Janice announced that the MGA marketing team was seeking volunteers from the MGAEC to take part in a professional photoshoot. The photos would be used on the MGA website and promotional material and members interested in participating should contact Janice.

4.2.6 Intra-committee communication

Whatsapp was currently being used for internal communication among committee members. It was proposed that inter-committee communications be moved to Slack, with a suggested 72 hour turnaround time for responding. It was noted that the program could be turned off during week-ends, and that a number of different channels could be established. There was general agreement to implementing this proposal.

5. Membership matters

Members were informed that the positions of Peninsula Campus Representative and Indigenous Students' Officer had been advertised but no applications had been received.

A proposal had been received to establish a Parental Officer office-bearer position. Rose expressed interest in the position if it were established but committed to continuing to run the family events regardless. Annie noted that Family Support Officer would be a more inclusive position title and the committee agreed. It was established that the MGAEC has the power to create additional office-bearer positions. Rose agreed to coordinate a subcommittee to clarify the details of this position.

The International Students' Officer internal election was to be finalised. The two final nominees for the position were Maggie Gendy and Anumanth Senthilkumar. It was proposed that the position be shared. Maggie and Anumanth had a private discussion and agreed to share position of International Students' Officer, concentrating on HDR and GPG respectively.

Both candidates nominated themselves for the shared position and both nominations were seconded by Radhik. There being no further nominations, the committee voted unanimously to accept both candidates, and Maggie and Anumanth were declared jointly elected to the role of International Students' Officer.

It was agreed that each should have their own separate email addresses created.

6. Next meeting

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