

Meeting 09/2021

A meeting of the **Monash Graduate Association (MGA) Executive Committee** was held from 6.00pm – 7.00pm, Thursday 28 October 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), Karyn Low, Elliot Anderson, Yingheng Tan, Philip Kairns, David Nash, Deven Kumar, Nathalie Farah, Arjun Sanjeev, Elnaz Mokhtari, Maddie Herath.
Apologies	Priyanka Nathani
In attendance	Janice Boey, Jenny Reeder, Zuzana Quinn,

1.3 Consideration of the agenda

Elliot added item 4.2.4 Supervisor of the Year.

2. Minutes and Action sheet

2.1 Minutes 08/2021 for confirmation

It was moved:

That the minutes of MGAEC meeting September 08/2021 be confirmed.

Moved: David Nash

Seconded: Nathalie Farah

Carried.

2.2 Action sheet

Caitlyn looked into the possibility of swot vac being extended to two weeks, as well as the proposal to move mid-semester break back into the middle of semester.

She reported that it would be difficult for the university to make the changes because of the extremely tight semester deadlines, but agreed to raise this with the Vice-Chancellor at the next VC-SPAF meeting.

3. Reports

3.1 President's report

Caitlyn informed members that she had commenced a series of meetings with senior managers including the Provost, DVC (Education) and Chief Operating Officer.

The aim of the meetings was to brief new DVCs about the MGA and to find out what plans they had for their portfolios.

3.2 Members' reports

All submitted written reports were noted.

3.3 Staff report

Noted.

3.4 September 2021 profit and loss report

Noted.

3.5 MGAEC meeting attendance records

Noted.

4. Business

4.1 Business arising

4.1.1 CISA AGM

The CISA AGM was held and the new committee had been voted in. The MGA was pleased to note that Jamie Lam, an HDR student from Parkville campus, had been elected to the CISA Postgraduate position. Deven and Jamie represented the MGA at the AGM.

Deven expressed a number of concerns about the CISA AGM and the way in which the meeting was conducted. Caitlyn commented that prior to 2021 CISA had failed to comply with their own constitution, failed to provide an audited report for members and failed to provide an environment where women were welcomed and encouraged to participate. However, the 2021 committee had worked hard to get the organisation back on track and she was confident that they were now operating in an equitable, principled and transparent manner.

4.1.2 SSAF capital development submissions

Caitlyn explained that 20% of the SSAF paid by all students went into a capital development fund used to fund various submissions made by Monash individual staff, students and organisations.

The following submissions were to be submitted on behalf of the MGA for SSAF capital development funding in 2022:

Clayton

- Duress buttons and security phones in all grad lounges
- 3 x Screens for stairwell outside bookshop in Campus Centre
- Remodel front wall of MGA student lounge in Campus Centre

Caulfield

- Refurb of H Building graduate lounge
- Permanent roof structure over grass at western end of lawn (Caul)
- Duress buttons and security phones in all grad lounges

Peninsula

- Refurb of MGA office/advocacy room in Struan House
- Duress buttons and security phones in Struan House graduate lounge

Deven complained that the furniture in the Graduate Hub was very dirty and needed to be either replaced or cleaned. It was noted that this space was managed by MGRO, not the MGA. Jenny offered to speak with MGRO about Deven's request.

4.1.3 PostAc

As discussed in the September meeting, the MGA planned to subscribe to the PostAc website for a trial period of two years, after which the subscription was to be reviewed. It was explained that the PostAc website used AI search engines designed to identify jobs that would be relevant for students with research skills.

It was moved:

That the MGA subscribe to the PostAc website for a trial of two years.

Moved: David Nash

Seconded: Maddie Herath

Carried.

4.1.4 Malaysia campus advocacy

Following the discussions held with MUPA members last month, it had become evident that many graduate students were not using the advocacy service provided by university staff on Malaysia campus. While the MGA did not represent graduate students on international campuses, the MGA advocates had been providing pro-bono advocacy for over ten years because of the lack of independent advocacy for students. It was proposed that the MGA offer to contract out their advocacy services to Malaysia, as well as making a similar offer to other international graduate campuses such as those in Indonesia and China.

The proposal was supported in principle. It was agreed that culturally, many Malaysian students would not reach out to staff with a complaint as they were concerned about negative ramifications. The MGA had built a relationship of trust and rapport with the Malaysian graduate community through MGA's provision of services and mentoring of MUPA, over many years. It was suggested that the MGA should advertise the advocacy service to students and inform them about the advocacy process, emphasizing the confidentiality and independence of the service.

Some MUPA members had reported concerns about student finances. It was suggested that the MGA could help to develop a survey for MUPA to administer. Phil talked briefly about the difficulties in identifying as queer in a country such as Malaysia where homosexuality was illegal. He noted that there was no queer officer within MUPA, and offered to set up a chat session for Malaysia graduates.

4.1.5 Expanded MGA welfare program

The MGA was proposing to expand the number and breadth of grants available to graduate students under the MGA Welfare program. Details of budgets and finalised regulations would be brought back to the November meeting for approval.

4.1.6 Supervisor of the Year

Elnaz, Phil, David and Elliot had read through 100 applications for the 2021 Supervisor of the Year and decided on the winner. A celebratory event would be held in December subject to Covid restrictions and room availability.

Caitlyn thanked the subcommittee for their work in reading through all the applications.

4.2 General Business

4.2.1 Body Worn Cameras (BWC)

The Director of Community Safety and Security, Simon Kupec, had requested feedback from the MGA about the proposed introduction of body cameras for security staff.

The committee reviewed the information provided by Simon and acknowledged that the cameras could assist in deterring poor behaviour on the part of staff and students, and could also provide important evidence in the instance of an altercation. However, there were some concerns raised and a request for further information, in summary:

Would the cameras be on and recording all the time?

If not, when would they be turned on?

Where would the recorded data be stored, and for how long?

Who would have access to the data?

Could students access the data if they had a complaint about another student, or staff member or the security staff member who was recording?

Would the data be provided to authorities external to the university?

How would students be informed about the fact that they were being recorded?

How would students be informed about their rights? For example, students needed to be told that whatever they revealed to security was not confidential, would be recorded and may be used against them as evidence.

The role of security can be confusing for students.

What exactly is their role?

How is that explained and communicated to students?

This needs to be transparent because students may make admissions to security staff because they are feeling unsafe and under duress; admissions which may later be unhelpful for them if they end up facing any type of formal university or legal procedure.

Finally, it was suggested that it may be better to delay the introduction of body-worn cameras until students had settled in to all the other new requirements of returning to university, such as scanning codes and having vaccination certificates checked. It was agreed that while these Covid measures were necessary they nonetheless gave rise to a feeling of being policed, so introducing a further policing method at the same time may be perceived as aggressive.

The committee requested that their questions be put to Simon.

4.2.2 Online HDR induction for international campuses

It was proposed that the MGA work with MGRO to develop and coordinate a central online HDR induction to be made available to all HDRs students on domestic and international campuses.

It was noted that the MGA currently ran a session within the HDR induction run on Malaysia campus by MUPA. With a new graduate campus opening on Indonesia, it

was agreed that it would be efficient to develop an induction session open to all international cohorts, run live twice a year but available all year round online, for those HDR students who commence outside of the traditional semester timing. The committee supported this proposal.

4.2.3 Nottingham Community Neighbourhood House

The committee was informed that the MGA had connected with the Nottingham Community Neighbourhood House (NHNH), situated immediately north of Clayton campus. It was explained that the NHNH provided free meals and other forms of support for the local community, which included students attending the Monash University Clayton campus.

Ideas for developing the partnership were discussed and included:

- a joint application for a Victorian government grant to provide free food through NHNH;
- advertise NHNH food pantry to all students;
- a possible food drive on monash for uni staff to donate food for the NHNH pantry;
- any excess perishable food NHNH have on any given day to be transferred to MGA for distribution to students.

The committee approved the relationship being developed and any initiatives that benefitted students being implemented.

5. Membership

No business.

- 6. Next meeting** – It was agreed that the next meeting would be held in November 2021 at a time and date to be confirmed.