

Meeting 02/2023

A meeting of the **Monash Graduate Association (MGA) Executive Committee** was held from 2.00pm – 5.00pm, Friday 28 April 2023, in MGRO meeting room, B01, basement, 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, Anumanth Senthilkumar, Maria Lammerding, Ummatul Siddique, Annie Roys.

Apologies: Sarah May, Phil Cairns, Michael Lim, Serra De Mello, Rose Huang, Maggie Gendy, Jenny Reeder (Executive Officer).

Observers: Haider Shah, graduate student.

In attendance: Zuzana Quinn, Senior Advocate
Jessica Fimmel, HR and Finance Manager,
Janice Boey, Student Engagement Manager
James Breheny, Advocate

1.3 Consideration of the agenda

Two items were added:

1. MGA statements about public events; and
2. Fixed term appointments for PhDs.

The Chair noted that the meeting was inquorate and while discussion could continue, all motions would be held over to the following meeting.

2. Minutes and Action sheet

2.1 Minutes of meetings 02/2023 for confirmation

Held over.

2.2 Action sheet

Noted.

3. Reports

3.1 President's report

Noted.

3.2 Members' reports

Noted.

3.3 Staff report

Noted.

3.4 March 2023 profit and loss report

Noted.

3.5 MGAEC meeting attendance records

Noted.

4. Business

4.1 Business arising

4.1.1 Bank Australia accounts

Serra De Mello was the only remaining committee member who had not confirmed her identity with the bank. As Serra was absent from the meeting, the President undertook to remind Serra to attend the Bank as her identity verification process was urgently needed to be completed in order for the MGA to be able to carry out its affairs.

4.1.2 Clayton to Caulfield shuttle bus

Since the last meeting, Monash University had provided the MGA with more data on the Caulfield-Clayton shuttle bus usage. Monash University had explained that in order to increase the frequency of buses travelling between Clayton and Peninsula campuses, (from a two hour wait to a one hour wait), the Caulfield-Clayton service frequency had been marginally reduced, (from a 20 minute wait to a 30 minute wait). It was noted that the MGA had an obligation to all graduate students on all campuses.

Discussion ensued and the following concerns were raised:

- Not all students were using the scanners so the data provided by BPD was not accurate.
- If Monash University ended access to on-line delivery for oncampus students, more students would be attending their classes in person resulting in an increase in shuttle bus usage.
- Transport wardens were not disseminating information about students having access to MYKI cards in the instance where students were unable to secure a seat on the shuttle bus.
- This decision was more about cutting costs than considering the services needed by students.

It was agreed that Radhik would request the university to:

1. Ensure data collected was accurate by encouraging all students to scan in all their trips;
2. Better promote the availability of the public transport alternative using free MYKI cards, such as posters on electronic boards near the bus station;
3. Re-assess its position once all students had returned to oncampus classes and more comprehensive data had been collected.

4.1.3 Revised 2023 budget

Noted.

4.1.4 Graduate representation on Council

Monash University Council has only one student representative position, and this position is usually occupied by undergraduates whose population is twice the size of the graduate student population and therefore undergraduate candidates garner more votes. As such the graduate perspective was not present in University Council decision-making and this left graduate students without representation. Radhik wrote to Mr Simon McKeon, AO Monash University Chancellor, requesting that the system be reviewed, and offered a number of suggestions to address the inequity of the situation, including: adding a graduate student representative position to the membership; alternating the position between an undergraduate representative and a graduate representative; and weighting the voting system to reflect the difference in population sizes. The Chancellor responded saying he would consider Radhik's request.

4.2 General business

4.2.1 University Accord submission

Committee members acknowledged the Federal Government review of the higher education sector. The MGA staff had lodged a brief submission based on advocacy statistics and MGA survey data. The Government would provide more opportunities for further or amended submissions as the review process continued. Radhik asked for any further input from the committee to be directed to him.

A question arose as to whether or not the power of the Ombudsman within Monash and externally could be strengthened. The office of the Ombudsman in Victoria was created by the Ombudsman Act 1973. Powers and responsibilities were outlined in this legislation. The University Student Ombudsman powers mirrored the powers of the State Ombudsman. In a nutshell, the role was one that considered breaches of due process of government agencies and made recommendations to same.

Another issue was the length of time students had to wait for visa approvals. The most extreme cases reported to committee members were two years. There seemed to be a disconnect; Monash University argued that the delays were in the country of origin, or Home Affairs rather than within the university system. The University relied on income via HDR completions so it was agreed that it was in everyone's interests to process visas promptly. The Vice Chancellor had raised this issue at Federal level.

4.2.2 AGM Annual member report

Members were reminded they needed to submit an annual report of how they conducted their portfolio for the forthcoming AGM. This report was in addition to and did not replace, a report needed for the May MGAEC meeting. A template report would be sent to members by email. A zoom link was also provided for the AGM.

4.2.3 LGBTIQA+ art launch

An invitation was extended to the MGAEC and MGA staff to attend an exhibition on 4 May. Details were provided at the meeting.

4.2.4 OHS Policy

Held over.

4.2.5 Bank Account

A motion that had been conducted by email after the March meeting in respect to the MGA Bank account and unanimously accepted, was noted.

4.2.6 MGAEC member Conflict of interest

It was noted that the MIISON network, originally set up to connect MSO international student officers to share information, had started taking on a representative role. This raised a concern about a potential conflict of interest for the MGA International Students Officers, both of whom sat on both MIISON and the MGAEC.

Anumanth tabled the draft MIISON terms of reference, which now clearly stated that MIISON saw itself as a representative body, advocating for the interests of all international students.

The committee discussed the matter at length, concluding that the situation did create a serious conflict of interest and suggested that the situation be resolved by MIISON removing the representative role from their terms of reference, thus reverting back to their original status as a network. As the MIISON President, Anumanth was charged to raise this concern with MIISON, and to facilitate the change.

4.2.6 MGA statements about public events

Saham reminded interested members to join the subcommittee to decide the MGA's policy on responding to national and international incidents of importance. Members were requested to provide their availability so that this subcommittee could provide an outcome before the end of the term of office.

4.2.7 Fixed term appointments for PhDs

Saham reported that the Monash HR project team were hosting student zoom Q&A sessions on 9 and 12 May. The key points about this initiative that were provided at the last GRC meeting were:

- There would likely be 450 fixed-term roles allocated across the university.
- The role may be flexible with 0.1-0.6 FTE to accommodate PhD requirements (this meant that a minimum of 7.25 hours and a maximum of 43.50 hours would need to be worked in a fortnight).
- The role would be more than just sessional teaching; it included curriculum and course development, class/content delivery and teaching, and engagement with the scholarship of learning and teaching.
- Eligibility for the role was that candidates must have at least 1 year left in their scholarship/tenure, and the role could be fixed to the duration of the PhD (ie, if a new student enrolled and applied for this role at the start of their PhD, they may be offered a fixed-term of 4 years).
- The role was titled as an "Assistant Lecturer" position, classification of Level A.
- Any research undertaken in this role would be separate to the research completed as part of a student's PhD program.
- The roles were available to both full-time and part-time students
- Students did not need to have passed confirmation to be eligible to apply.

5. Membership matters

5.1 Resignation

The committee acknowledged receipt of the resignation of Cheuk Lun Chiu (Ken) and thanked him for his participation on and contribution to the MGAEC.

The Chair called for interest from committee members in taking up the vacated office-bearer role of Coursework Education Officer. Maria Lammerding nominated herself to the position and was seconded by Radhik. There were no further nominations. Maria was declared elected to the position of Coursework Education Officer and agreed to also take up the graduate representative position on University Education Committee, vacated by Ken.

5.2 Cooption application

Held over.

6. Next meeting

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

The meeting closed at 4pm.