

Meeting 03/2024

A meeting of the **Monash Graduate Association (MGA) Executive Committee** was held from 2.30pm – 4.30pm, Wednesday 24 April 2024, at Building H, Caulfield-8-H801-Board Room, Caulfield campus and by zoom.

MINUTES

1. Formal matters meeting commenced at 2.45pm

1.1 Acknowledgement of country

The MGAEC President 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 & Apologies

Present: Saham Hettiarachchi, Calvin Chow, Jonathan Robberts, Aakash Saraf, Harshita Rathi, Rachel Lee, Ying-Xian Evelyn Lai, Runali Patil, Grace Bennetts, Arathy Kurup, Ummatul Siddique, Kritika Arora, Mahima Chowdhury.

Apologies: Phil Cairns.

In attendance: Jenny Reeder, Executive Officer
Zuzana Quinn, Senior Advocate
Janice Boey, Student Engagement Manager

1.3 Consideration of the agenda

No new items were added.

2. Minutes and Action sheet

2.1 Minutes of meeting 3/2024 March for confirmation

It was moved:

That the minutes of MGAEC meeting March 03/2024 be confirmed.

Moved: Arathy Kurup

Seconded: Ying-Xian Evelyn Lai

Carried.

2.2 Action sheet

Noted.

3. Reports

3.1 President's report

The President's report was noted.

3.2 Members' reports

Members' reports were noted. Jonathan thanked staff for making members' reports accessible on the MGA website to the graduate student community.

3.3 Staff report

The staff report was noted. In response to a question from the committee, it was confirmed that the MONSU food boxes that had been set aside for graduate students, had been delivered.

3.4 March 2024 profit and loss reports

The March 2024 profit and loss report was noted.

3.5 MGAEC meeting attendance records

The MGAEC meeting attendance records were noted as true and accurate.

4. Business

4.1 Business arising 2.55pm

4.1.1 Honoraria Regulations

The Honoraria Regulations were approved in the March meeting of the MGAEC. The intention of the Honoraria Regulations was to foster members' engagement and to ensure members were accountable to the graduate student body. Subsequent to the March meeting, additional amendments were proposed to make clear the administrative process that would be applied in order to enact the regulations, as well as include a safeguard against the members provided with the power to approve Honoraria, in the instance where those specific members may have a conflict of interest.

The MGAEC made one further minor amendment to clause 12.5.1 of the Honoraria Regulations.

It was moved:

That the amended MGA Honoraria regulation be accepted.

Moved: Jonathan Robberts

Seconded: Arathy Kurup

Carried.

4.1.2 AGM Motions

Saham explained that the AGM was a very important event and that all the MGAEC members were expected to be present at the forthcoming meeting. The AGM would be held entirely online, allowing easy access for graduate students on every campus, off-campus sites and those studying by distance. Saham reminded members that motions must be submitted no later than Friday 26 April.

Jan noted that engaging students to attend AGMs was traditionally challenging and asked the MGAEC to email her with any ideas on how to improve engagement and MGA AGM visibility.

4.1.3 NTEU's letter to senior management

Saham provided an update on this matter explaining that the NTEU had asked for MGA's input and support to a letter they proposed sending to the University. In this letter the NTEU had expressed outrage at how much money was spent on the farewell for the last Vice Chancellor and included a number of requests and recommendations. The MGAEC had previously agreed to provide an addendum to the NTEU letter. The addendum was sent to all MGAEC members in advance of this meeting and would be added to the letter which would shortly be sent to the University Council by the NTEU.

4.1.4 Audit report

The MGA external financial audit had now been completed with only minor recommendations for change. It was noted that as the MGA budget for this year was likely to be over \$3M, the ACNC would now treat the MGA as a Tier 3 Association. There were no practical implications for the MGA, as the MGA was already complying with Tier 3 requirements, primarily, that an annual external audit be conducted.

4.1.5 MIISON

Calvin provided an update, noting that the MSOs had previously agreed in-principle that they (as opposed to the university) should jointly have the responsibility of managing MIISON, given it was a student network. So far only the MGA and MUISS reps had attended meetings to progress the matter, but the lack of interest had been evident all year, with ISE having been unable to hold a meeting when they were overseeing the group.

The committee went on to discuss matters of interest to the international student population. It was understood that Monash University provided rental subsidies to food retailers on campus, so it was queried whether this discount resulted in the cost of food on campus being lowered. Calvin also mentioned that of the \$3.5m collected in parking fines last year, Monash University received only \$200,000. The Vice Chancellor had explained this was because the car-parking operations were contracted out to a private company, and not run by the university.

4.1.6 Misuse of the MGA's ABN

Saham updated the committee, explaining that the University had unequivocally apologised to the MGA for the unauthorised use of the MGA ABN incident, as discussed in previous meetings. The University assured the MGA that proper processes had now been implemented and would prevent this type of incident from happening in the future.

There was still some concern about the fact that a university staff member who had control over the distribution of SSAF to the MGA and had been known to make biased decisions against the MGA in the past, had knowingly transferred funds to an MGA graduate group without the MGA's knowledge. The committee queried what action had been taken in relation to that particular aspect of the matter, and what assurances they had that the staff member concerned would be able to act in a professional and unbiased manner in the future.

4.1.7 2024 MGA budget

The MGA's financial situation was discussed. It was acknowledged that as GPG enrolments at Monash were finally recovering post-Covid, the MGA would receive an increased income in 2024.

However, there were still significant long-term problems for the MGA including:

- The MGA had been restricted by the university in the amount of reserves able to be held. Subsequently the small reserve held by the MGA had been quickly exhausted in order to carry the organisation through the post-Covid period, and needed to be rebuilt as soon as possible;
- Staff salaries were increasing faster than income (salary increases were dictated by the Enterprise Agreement versus income which was dictated by CPI increases in SSAF and enrolment numbers). This had resulted in too large a portion of the MGA budget being allocated to salaries;
- There was not enough funding able to be allocated to visible events for students on all campuses; and
- The current delivery of services in 2024 had already been dramatically reduced in Semester 1, 2024 due to lack of funds.

The MGA's financial situation was not sustainable and it was agreed that a staff restructure needed to be considered. The tabled restructure was discussed in-camera by the committee.

It was moved:

That the tabled MGA staff restructure be approved and enacted effective 1 July 2024.

Moved Harshita Rathi
Seconded Arathy Kurup
Carried.

4.2 General Business

4.2.1 Change of Public Officer

It was recommended that the HR manager, Charlie Li, would assume the position of Public Officer (previously sitting with the Executive Officer position), because the responsibilities were more closely aligned with the HR and Finance Manager's role.

It was moved:

That the MGA HR and Finance Manager Charlie Li assume the role of MGA Public Officer.

Moved Harshita Rathi
Seconded Arathy Kurup
Carried.

4.2.2 Migration Strategy Impact Report

This item was held over to the May meeting.

5. Membership matters

5.1 Co-option of additional member

This item was held over to the May meeting.

6. Next meeting

The next meeting would be held in May 2024 at a time and place to be confirmed by members' availability.

The meeting closed at 4.47pm.