

Meeting 01/2024

A meeting of the **Monash Graduate Association (MGA) Executive Committee** was held from 3pm – 5pm, Tuesday 13 February 2024, in the CCD Seminar room, Clayton campus and by zoom.

MINUTES

1. Formal matters

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 (in person), Ying-Xian Evelyn Lai (zoom), Rachel Lee (in person), Runali Patil (zoom), Calvin Chow (in person) Arathy Kurup (zoom) Ummatul Siddique (zoom), Jonathan Robberts (in person), Harshita Rathi (zoom), Mahima Chowdhury (zoom)

Apologies: Phil Kairns, Grace Bennetts.

Absent: Prashansa Chadha

In attendance: Jenny Reeder Executive Officer
Zuzana Quinn, Senior Advocate
Janice Boey, Student Engagement Manager
Charlie Li, HR and Finance Manager
Ryan Edwards, Research Officer
Ash Finn, Graduate Policy and Liaison Officer

Observers: Sharifa Rose Ee, Kritika Arora, Dieu Linh Tran, Tafadzwa Chinhoyi, Aakash Saraf

1.3 Consideration of the agenda

No new items were added.

2. Minutes and Action sheet 10.10am

2.1 Minutes of meeting 12/2023 for confirmation

It was moved:

That the minutes of MGAEC meeting December 12/2023 be confirmed.

Moved: Jonathan Robberts

Seconded: Ummatul Siddique

Carried.

2.2 Action sheet

Noted.

3. Reports

3.1 President's report

Noted.

3.2 Members' reports

Noted.

Vice-President

Further to his tabled report, Jonathan explained that he had received feedback about the need for greater transparency and for the MGAEC to be more inclusive of HDR students in its membership. The MGAEC agreed to make members' reports available to the constituent student community on the MGA website. It was noted that sometimes members' reports contained confidential information so it was confirmed that confidential information would be redacted from the reports prior to publication.

The committee discussed other ways in which the MGA could report back to the wider community including via a member blog, live feed posts and more regular reports on current issues.

Peninsula campus representative

Umma spoke to her report, informing members that she had lobbied for a pathology centre to be established on Peninsula campus, but had been informed by university staff that the number of students on Peninsula had been deemed insufficient to support a pathology centre on campus.

International Students' Officer

Calvin advised that the MIISON meeting had been postponed.

3.3 Staff report

Noted.

3.4 December 2023 profit and loss report

Noted.

3.5 MGAEC meeting attendance records

Noted.

4. Business

4.1 Business arising

4.1.1 MGA 2023 & 2024 funding

Saham advised that during the week commencing 5 February, MGA had finally received the remainder of its 2023 funding. This followed lengthy negotiations and the implementation by the MGA of the recommendations made by Monash University in relation to the MGA's election process.

At this point in the proceedings, the meeting was adjourned due to a severe storm resulting in the evacuation of the building and widespread damage to the campus. The meeting reconvened on Friday, 23 February at 1:30pm in the MGA meeting room, C2, Caulfield campus and by zoom. Two further items were added to the agenda: 4.1.6 Procedures for appointments to university committees; and 4.2.9 Misuse of MGA's ABN.

In attendance at the reconvened meeting:

Calvin Chow (in person), Saham Hettiarachchi (in person), Ying-Xian Evelyn Lai (in person)
Jonathan Robberts (in person 10.56am) Ummatul Siddique (zoom), Rachel Lee (zoom) Harshita
Rathi (in person 12.33pm), Mahima Chowdhury (zoom 12.41pm), Arathy Kurup (zoom)

Apologies: Phil Kairns, Grace Bennetts.

Absent: Prashansa Chadha, Runali Patil.

Observers: Sharifa Rose, Kritika Arora, Linh Dieu Tran, Tafadzwa Chinhoyi, Aarkash Seraf

Present:

Jenny Reeder Executive Officer
Zuzana Quinn, Senior Advocate
Janice Boey, Student Engagement Manager
Charlie Li, HR and Finance Manager
Leilani Duong, Student Engagement Officer

4.1.2 CAPA ACM and G08 MSOs

Saham reminded members that CAPA, the national postgraduate representative body, had been dysfunctional for over two years and the MGA had not paid any membership fee during that period. In the absence of any active national representation, a group of independent graduate associations from the G08 universities had formed an alliance and agreed to jointly lobby the Federal government on a number of issues including the government's recently announced changes to the visa conditions under which international students could enter, study and work in Australia.

4.1.3 Election Regulations Amendments

This item was initially dealt with during the meeting on 13 February 2024 at which the following motion was passed:

It was moved:

That the MGAEC approve the Election Regulations amendments.

Moved: Rachel Lee

Seconded: Mahima Chowdhury

Carried.

At the reconvened meeting the Executive Officer suggested a further minor amendment to the Election Regulations that would allow the MGAEC the option to accept an election tribunal comprising external members supplied by an election company, in addition to the option of the existing tribunal composition comprising university staff members. This proposal had arisen after discussions with OGL, the external election company conducting the 2024 elections, who had detailed their usual

manner of setting up a tribunal. The MGAEC agreed to the further amendment and the amended Election Regulations were approved.

It was moved:

That the MGAEC approve the Election Regulations amendments.

Moved: Calvin Chow

Seconded: Ying-Xian Evelyn Lai

Carried.

4.1.4 Member accountability

Saham explained that MGAEC members received honoraria according to the MGA Honoraria regulations, but that the regulations were not very specific about what members must do in order to be deemed to be carrying out their duties. It was agreed that the MGA must be accountable for how honoraria is paid as this funding comes from constituents' amenities fees. It was proposed that a table be developed and included in the Honoraria regulations, where the minimum duties required of members in each quarter were specified, and members' performance could then be appraised objectively against these criteria. Criteria would include: attending MGAEC meetings; submitting a report to MGAEC meetings; attending the AGM; assisting at orientations; and being active in portfolios or an area of choice (for general members). Failure to meet these criteria may result in a reduced honoraria for that quarter, or in instances of non-compliance, may disqualify members from their honoraria entitlements.

Approval of this item was postponed to the next meeting pending incorporation of suggestions and feedback from the MGAEC.

4.1.5 PPA signatories and update

It was explained that the PPA was one of the MGA's largest graduate groups and the mGA had established a bank account for them to operate. Permission was needed for the PPA Treasurer to access the PPA bank account.

It was moved:

That the signatories to the 'PPA' Westpac bank account (BSB: 033 289, Acc:361 640) shall be:

Position	Current Incumbent	Type
PPA Treasurer	Paulo Simon	Student
Executive Officer	Jenny Reeder	Staff
HR and Finance Manager	Charlie Li	Staff

Moved Jonathan Robberts

Seconded by Umma Siddique

Carried.

4.1.6 Procedures for appointments to university committees

The MGA General Regulations had been updated and required approval. Minor changes had been made to update the terminology, and regular review dates had also been inserted.

It was moved:

That the MGAEC approve the MGA General Regulations amendments.

Moved Jonathan Robberts
Seconded by Rachel Lee
Carried.

4.2 General Business

4.2.1 Student association information sheet

Members noted the student association information sheet developed by the MGA which listed the contact details for every MSO, as well as explaining the structure and representational roles of each MSO. The document was updated every six months and sent out to university staff members who were often confused about the different student associations operating at the university.

4.2.2 MGA Clayton space submission

The committee noted that the MGA had submitted an application for more office and graduate student lounge space on Clayton campus.

4.2.3 MGA Parkville space submission

Saham informed the committee that the Parkville coursework graduate population was growing rapidly and they currently had a very small lounge area. The university had purchased a building nearby which would open up additional available space. He explained that the MGA had submitted an application for the creation of a larger graduate student lounge on Parkville campus.

4.2.4 Appointment of RO for 2024 elections

The University had agreed to fund the employment of an external election company, OGL (<https://www.oglgroup.com.au>) to run the 2024 MGAEC elections. Management of the election company and oversight of the elections would be handled by the MGA staff as usual.

It was moved:

That the MGAEC approve the appointment of election company OGL to provide a Returning Officer for the 2024 MGAEC elections.

Moved Calvin Chow
Second by Umma Siddique
Carried.

4.2.5 Email motion for Coursework Education Officer

An internal election for the office-bearer position of MGA Coursework Officer was conducted by email on 23 January 2024. One nomination was received. Nine members participated in the election, and Harshita Rathi was elected to the position of MGA Coursework Officer for the duration of the 2023-2024 term of office (8 for, 0 against and 1 abstention). Harshita was congratulated by the committee.

4.2.6 AGM motions

Saham reminded members that any motions that the MGAEC needed to put through the AGM should be considered now, so that they could be prepared in time to be discussed, finalised and posted in accordance with the AGM regulations. The AGM was scheduled to be held at 1pm, Thursday 16 May, 2024.

4.2.7 MGA mission and values

Jonathan spoke to this item, and in summary, noted that:

- The MGA would, from a sustainability perspective, benefit from clearly identified values for staff, committee, and students.
- Organisational alignment was needed.
- All cohorts needed to be motivated to join the MGAEC.
- The MGA needed to attract volunteers in greater numbers.
- The MGA was a strategic association which needed to be clearly defined as did the tracking of progress in respect to key strategies.
- A greater emphasis was needed on research, advocacy and representation and the engagement of domestic students.

Jonathan proposed forming a working group to discuss developing workshops and member surveys (including both a qualitative and quantitative approach), with a 2 month time-line to completion.

4.2.8 Associateship program

Held over.

4.2.9 Misuse of the MGA ABN

Members were informed that the MGA had recently become aware that the MGA's ABN had been used by several Monash staff members to raise and approve invoices, without the knowledge and authorisation of the MGA. The MGA had written to the Monash University CFO reporting the matter and requesting that the university carry out an investigation in the first instance, to establish the details. The MGA would decide on any further action once a detailed report had been received from the university.

5. Membership matters

Applications for co-option to the two vacant MGAEC positions were considered. Eight applications had been received: one for the Caulfield campus representative position (Kritika Arora); and seven for the General representative position (Muhammad Adnan, Subbulakshmi Natarajan, Aakash Seraf, Maggie Gendy, Sharifah Rose Ee, Dieu Linh Tran and Tafadzwa Chinhoyi.)

Kritika Arora was the sole nominee for the Caulfield representative position. Kritika spoke briefly to her application and answered questions from the committee. An election was conducted and Kritika was declared elected to the MGAEC as the Caulfield campus representative and congratulated by the committee.

The remaining seven applications for the General representative position were considered. The four applicants in attendance at the meeting were given the opportunity to speak to their applications. An election was conducted and Aakash

Saraf was declared elected to the MGAEC as a General representative and congratulated by the committee.

6. Next meeting

The next meeting would be held in March 2024 at a date and time tbc by committee members.

The meeting closed 2.04pm.