

Meeting 01/2020

A meeting of the **Monash Graduate Association (MGA) Executive Committee**
was held from 11:00am – 1:00pm, Thursday 27 February, 2020
in the MGA meeting room, Clayton campus.

Jenny Reeder
MGA Executive Officer
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MINUTES

The meeting opened at 11:06am.

1. Formal matters

1.1 Acknowledgement of country

The MGAEC would like to acknowledge and pay respect to the people of the Kulin nations as the original and ongoing owners and custodians of this unceded land.

1.2 Apologies

Present Roy Rozario (Chair), Julie Dao, Allison Ho, Nikhil Kathe, Jessica Lu, Caitlyn Neale Roby Vota, Xinxin Yang
Apologies Robyn Oxley, Georgia Dudgeon
Absent Pooja Bhageria
Observers Aman Madaan, David Tuck, Gareth Marley, Joel Samu, Jordana Grace Jean Bragg, Ke Xiou Tan, Preeti Mehta, Prithvi Raj Munday, Radhika Pankaj Jain, Syed Nahid Pasha
In attendance Janice Boey, Jessica Fimmel, Jenny Reeder

1.3 Consideration of the agenda

The following item was added:
4.2.5 MonTRACK (Nikhil Kathe)

2. Minutes and Action sheet

2.1 Minutes 11/2019 and 12/2019 for confirmation

That the minutes of MGAEC meetings November 11/2019 and December 12/2019 be confirmed.

Mover: Jessica Lu
Seconder: Julie Dao
One abstention
Carried.

2.2 Action sheet

The action sheet was noted.

3. Reports

3.1 President's report

The President's report was noted. Robyn sent her apologies as she was unable to attend today's meeting because she was representing MGA at the Universities Australia national conference in Canberra.

3.2 Office-bearer reports

The written reports were noted. The following points were highlighted:

Roby Vota, Queer Officer

Roby discussed with the committee the proposal by the Monash Student Association to run joint undergraduate and graduate Queer events. The committee noted that the MSA's aggressive stance on demanding a significant portion of the graduate funds made it difficult for the two associations to work together. On other campuses where the undergraduate associations had negotiated in good faith with the MGA regarding a transfer of graduate funds, the relationship was such that joint functions had been successfully run. The committee agreed the best approach would be to propose a campus-wide joint function, where all five Monash student organisations could work collaboratively on a larger community event. It was also suggested that GSA from the University of Melbourne could be included.

MGA would continue to run graduate-specific queer events as most graduate students had indicated that they preferred to engage with the graduate community with whom they shared similar experiences.

Julie Dao, Clayton Campus Representative and Research Education Officer

Julie noted that at a recent MNHS Faculty GRC meeting there had been a request for more information on the MGA's Financial assistance program for their graduate students.

3.3 Staff report

Noted. Jenny highlighted that due to the University's response to the COVID-19 outbreak, the MGA had cancelled 102 events across January and February already.

3.4 Profit and loss reports Nov 2019, Dec 2019 and Jan 2020

Noted.

3.5 MGAEC meeting attendance records

Noted.

4. Business

4.1 Business arising

4.1.1 Orientation activities 2020

Janice Boey presented on the planned MGA orientation activities happening for graduate students across Monash University during the deferred O-week commencing 16 March 2020.

4.1.2 Funding agreement with MONSU Caulfield

The funding agreement with MONSU Caulfield for 2020-2021 had now been signed. Negotiations would soon begin with the other undergraduate student organisations to cover the period 2021 - 2023.

4.1.3 MGA SSAF campaign

It was noted that the MGA SSAF campaign was currently on hold as the university had recently backed off from their former position threatening that they would direct graduate funds to the undergraduate student association without those funds going through the MGA. On the contrary the university had confirmed that the MGA would continue to receive 40 % of the graduate funding as per previous years, and would then have to negotiate with the undergraduates to determine how much graduate SSAF would be passed on.

The MGA had been asked to develop a dispute resolution process to use in the case of failing to come to agreement with an undergraduate student association on the amount of graduate funding to be transferred. The MGA submitted a draft dispute process that mirrored the process used in our funding agreement with the university, but placed the MGAEC as the final arbiter. This reflected the position supported by the graduate community via the 2019 SSAF survey. The understanding was that this process would be used in the soon-to-be negotiated funding agreement for 2021 – 2023. However there had been some indication from the university that they may not be taking 15% of the Clayton graduate SSAF and giving it to the MSA in 2020, and that instead, the dispute process being developed may be applied to 2020 as well as the next funding round in 2021-2023.

Clarification on the university's position has been requested but as yet MGA has not received a response. Should the 15% be removed again this year it is proposed that the SSAF campaign be continued as MGA is confident that this action not only breaches the MGA funding agreement with the university but also represents a breach of the SSAF guidelines.

4.1.4 MGA Emergency support scheme

A report outlining the 2019 trial of the MGA Emergency Support program was noted. The program would continue in 2020 for graduate students.

4.2 General Business

4.2.1 Election regulations review and RO appointment

An amended version of the Election regulations was put to the committee for approval. Three main changes were highlighted: adjustment to the dispute resolution procedure and the acceptance of digital statements only. It was also proposed that Ryan Edwards be appointed as the Returning Officer (RO).

It was moved:

That Ryan Edwards be approved as the Returning Officer for the MGAEC elections.

Moved: Roy Rozario

Seconded: Julie Dao

Carried.

It was moved:

That the proposed changes to the MGA election regulations be accepted.

Moved: Roy Rozario
Seconded: Nikhil Kathe
Carried.

4.2.2 Enterprise Agreement

It was noted that Robyn and Roy would represent the MGAEC in the upcoming MGA staff Enterprise Agreement negotiations.

4.2.3 CAPA invoice

It was noted that in the latest invoice received from CAPA, the figures for the calculation of the MGA's fee (based on per capita) appeared to include graduate students enrolled through Gippsland, Malaysia and South African campuses, who weren't represented by the MGA. The MGA planned to contact CAPA to request that the figures be corrected.

The committee discussed the increasing amount of funding MGA were paying to CAPA with the rapid growth of graduate coursework student enrolments at Monash, and whether or not this represented good value for the Monash graduate student community. It was agreed that CAPA was a valuable association and should be supported. However the committee noted that most of CAPA's role was representative, and the costs involved in representation did not rise with the size of the population. At the same time, the MGA was having to cancel events because of a lack of funding. The outcome of the discussion was an agreement to cap the payment to CAPA. It was agreed that the MGA would pay \$35,000 to CAPA in 2020, and this funding cap would apply into the future. This would require a request to CAPA for a remission of debt of \$525 for 2020, and notification to them of the cap for future years.

It was moved:

That the annual CAPA fee paid by the MGA be permanently capped at \$35,000.

Moved: Roy Rozario
Seconded: Julie Dao
Carried.

4.2.4 Change of ABR contact

The committee were requested to approve an administrative change to the MGA's details registered with the Australian Business Registry which required updating. It was moved:

That the following changes be made to the Monash Graduate Association Inc's ABR listing: Jenny Reeder is added as an Associate on the ABR and Angela Ballantyne is removed as an Associate on the ABR.

Moved: Roy Rozario.

Seconded: Nikhil Kathe
Carried.

4.2.5 MonTRACK

Nikhil raised the issue that the University's MonTRACK program was being greatly reduced in 2020, and noted that he was concerned these cuts would disadvantage graduate students. The MonTRACK program was run in the first week of semester and involved student volunteers cold-calling new students to check-in on them and their adjustment to university life.

It was noted that the University had made the decision to reduce the program, with a view to eventually discontinue it, as it had not been successful. Problems had included a low up-take by students, and students not answering or returning phone calls, with the conclusion that most students preferred texting and avoided having to speak on the phone.

The committee agreed that face-to-face communication for new graduate students was more beneficial. As the University was developing a drop-in information desk to replace MonTRACK, the committee agreed that the MGA should direct its efforts towards ensuring those staffing the information desks were across all MGA support services and were aware of the difference between the undergraduate and graduate student associations.

5. Membership

Due to course completions by Ash Solanki and Egor Skaletckii and resignations from Cammi Murrup-Stewart and Travis Hong there were four vacant General Representative positions.

It was noted that the office-bearer roles of Indigenous Officer, Disabilities Officer and Coursework Education Officer were vacant and that cooptees indicating an interest in taking up one of these positions once coopted, would be favourably considered. As there were no cooptees who were eligible to take up the Indigenous Officer position, it was agreed that the committee would coopt only three new members, leaving the fourth vacancy to be filled by an eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander graduate.

Prior to commencing the elections, the committee clarified the criteria for the Disabilities Officer, agreeing that for a student to be eligible for this position, they must currently identify as having a disability or be a carer for someone with a disability. Preferably they would also be registered with Monash DSS.

The internal elections for the three vacant office-bearer positions were opened to the current members of the committee, prior to the cooption. There was no interest from the committee.

Elections for cooption to the three vacant MGAEC General Representative positions were conducted, with the Executive Officer acting as the Returning Officer.

Fourteen applications were received for the General Representative positions. One candidate withdrew prior to the meeting. Three were deemed ineligible by not having fulfilled the prerequisite of attending an MGAEC meeting as an observer prior to applying for cooption.

The remaining ten eligible applications for the General Representative position were: Aman

Madaan; David Tuck; Gareth Marley; Joel Samu; Jordana Grace Jean Bragg; Ke Xiou Tan; Preeti Mehta; Prithvi Raj Munday; Radhika Pankaj Jain; and Syed Nahid Pasha. Each cooptee was given the opportunity to speak and answer the committee's questions. The committee discussed the applicants and an election was conducted. Joel Samu, Jordana Bragg and Ke Xiou Tan were elected to the General Representative positions on the 2019/20 MGAEC.

The committee thanked all nominees for their time and interest in the MGAEC and encouraged them to apply again in the upcoming 2020/2021 elections. The committee welcomed Joel, Jordana and Ke Xiou to the team.

6. Next meeting

It was agreed that the next MGAEC meetings would be held as follows:

- March - Peninsula campus
- April - Clayton campus
- May – Caulfield campus

The meeting closed at 1:36pm.