

Meeting 01/2022

A meeting of the **Monash Graduate Association (MGA) Executive Committee**
was held from 5.15pm – 6.45pm, Tuesday 15 February 2022,
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), Elnaz Mokhtari, Maddie Herath, David Nash, Karyn Low, Yingheng Tan, Philip Kairns, Deven Kumar (left at 4.1.2), Amir Abyaneh, Melinda Krebsz.
Apologies	No apologies received
In attendance	Jenny Reeder, Zuzana Quinn, Janice Boey

Caitlyn invited the committee to introduce themselves to the two recently coopted members, Melinda and Amir.

1.3 Consideration of the agenda

No items were added.

2. Minutes and Action sheet

2.1 Minutes 11/2021 for confirmation

There were no corrections to the minutes.

It was moved:

That the minutes of MGAEC meeting 11/2021 December be confirmed.

Moved: Karyn Low

Seconded: David Nash

Carried.

2.2 Action sheet

Noted.

3. Reports

3.1 President's report

Noted.

3.2 Members' reports

Noted.

Elnaz reported that she had recently been personally assisting newly arrived international graduate students in her Faculty. She noted that the students did not appear to have been provided with support from the university and that they were in need of help with practical matters involved in settling in to a new country. The committee acknowledged that the International Student Service (ISS) ran inductions about local culture, but that newly arriving students could not access these services until they had enrolled. Elnaz pointed out that the students were facing difficulties immediately upon arriving and before they had enrolled. The Executive Officer offered to set up a meeting between Elnaz and ISS to see where the gaps in service were.

Deven noted some confusion over the International Students' Officer position and it was confirmed that he would hold the position until he finished his course at the end of February 2022, at which point Amir would take over the role. Until that time Amir remained a general member.

3.3 Staff report

Noted.

3.4 December 2021 profit and loss report

Noted.

3.5 MGAEC meeting attendance records

Noted. Karyn requested that the records be amended to show that she had submitted and circulated a late report for the December 2021 MGAEC meeting.

4. Business

4.1 Business arising

4.1.1 MGA Childcare grant

The committee noted that in November 2021 the MGA had announced a one-off childcare grant available to HDR students who had responsibility for the care of children and had lost research time during the year due to home-schooling responsibilities. All ADGRs kindly assisted in promoting this grant scheme to students and the grants were processed and issued prior to 2021 close-down.

Number of applications received: 182

Number of payments issued: 162

Total money distributed: \$72,000

Average value of grant: \$500

Students were very grateful for the funds and more so for the gesture; they appreciated acknowledgement from someone at Monash that lock-down had been additionally difficult for parents.

Caitlyn thanked the staff and student representatives for developing and administering this grant that was so supportive of this cohort of graduate students.

4.1.2 Motions for change of bank accounts

To aid in the MGA's transition to a more ethical bank, Bank Australia, the following signatories needed to be approved.

Motion 1

Due to the election of a new Vice-President of the MGAEC and a new PPA committee.

It is moved:

That the signatories on the following MGA bank accounts shall be:

BSB: 033 289, Acc: 285 369

BSB:033 181, Acc: 345 569

BSB: 033 289, Acc: 275 435

BSB: 033 090, Acc: 617127

Position	Current Incumbent	Type
MGAEC President	Caitlyn Neale	Student
MGAEC Vice-President	Melinda Krebsz	Student
Executive Officer	Jenny Reeder	Staff
Student Engagement Manager	Janice Boey	Staff

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

Position	Current Incumbent	Type
PPA President	Narges Mahdavian	Student
PPA Treasurer	Annabel Manoleras	Student
Executive Officer	Jenny Reeder	Staff
HR & Finance Officer	Jessica Fimmel	Staff

Moved: Philip Cairns

Seconded: Karyn Low

Carried.

Motion 2

It is moved:

That the signatories on all MGA bank accounts, except the designated PPA account, shall be:

Position	Current Incumbent	Type
MGAEC President	Caitlyn Neale	Student
MGAEC Vice-President	Melinda Krebsz	Student
Executive Officer	Jenny Reeder	Staff
Student Engagement Manager	Janice Boey	Staff

and the signatories to the 'PPA' bank account, shall be:

Position	Current Incumbent	Type
PPA President	Narges Mahdavian	Student
PPA Treasurer	Annabel Manoleras	Student
Executive Officer	Jenny Reeder	Staff
HR & Finance Officer	Jessica Fimmel	Staff

and the holders of MGA Visa Debit cards linked to MGA bank accounts shall be:

Position	Current Incumbent	Type
Executive Officer	Jenny Reeder	Staff
HR & Finance Officer	Jessica Fimmel	Staff
Student Engagement Manager	Janice Boey	Staff
Marketing & Communications Officer	Sandra Azavedo	Staff
Student Engagement Officer (Clayton)	Leilani Duong	Staff
Student Engagement Officer (Caulfield)	Lisa Falla	Staff

Moved: Philip Cairns
 Seconded: David Nash
 Carried.

4.1.3 CAPA ACM

Maddie reported on the CAPA ACM held by zoom on Monday 7 February 2022. This was the second attempt at an ACM, with the first scheduled in December 2021 being declared inquorate.

Maddie informed committee members that a number of affiliates including the MGA, were very unhappy with the way in which the ACM was being chaired to the point that they decided to leave the meeting prior to the annual elections. The main concerns included:

- Affiliates attempted to raise concerns relating to the business at hand and these concerns were dismissed by the chair without discussion;
- CAPA had held an extraordinary board meeting without due notice to members;
- The board had made a decision not to let non-financial members vote in elections, whereas in previous years that decision had been made by the ACM;
- It was unclear as to whether the President was an employee or a volunteer, and therefore issues such as the associated tax implications and payment of superannuation could not be determined;
- There had been previous requests to reduce the President's stipend from \$40,000 but this had not been enacted;
- The VP and General Secretary stipends had been increased without any consideration of what their increased duties would be;

Although the departure of the group of affiliates resulted in the ACM being inquorate, the election went ahead with only one person standing for each position.

The affiliates group intended to call a council meeting and request that the election be declared invalid and to rerun the elections as per the CAPA constitution, with proper notice to members allowing for the opportunity for members to nominate candidates.

The committee discussed the matter and agreed that:

- the MGA does not recognise the outcome of the CAPA election and requests that those elections are rerun as per the CAPA constitution; and
- Maddie would attend future meetings with the affiliate group and was empowered to make any further decisions on this matter on behalf of the MGAEC.

Caitlyn added that the correspondence she had received from CAPA had been rushed and there had been very little notice given to attend the rerun ACM, and she fully supported proceeding as proposed.

4.1.4 Report from off-campus graduate student staff

The committee noted the 2021 report received from the MGA Graduate Student Coordinators Alexandra Dvorscek and Isobel Leece, who were working at the Alfred Medical Research and Education Precinct (AMREP) running events and social activities for HDRs studying at that location. Caitlyn thanked Isabelle and Alexandra for succeeding in running some social activities and seminars to help build and support the graduate community during 2021 despite the pandemic.

4.1.5 Increase in coursework fees

The university had recently announced a fee increase of 6% to coursework degrees. Monash's increase was almost double that of other major universities, with University of Sydney at 3.8% and University of Melbourne at 3.2%. The committee noted that this came on top of the university's refusal to offer any compensation to students when courses were forced online due to the pandemic. Further to the committee's discussion of this matter in the December meeting Caitlyn wrote to the Vice-Chancellor in late December and received a note from the DVC (Education) inviting her to meet early in 2022 to discuss the matter further. Caitlyn reported that the meeting had been scheduled but not yet attended.

4.1.6 PostAc subscription

The committee was informed that the MGA had now subscribed to PostAc, which was a career website pitched to HDRs and developed by Inger Mewburn from ANU (aka the Thesis Whisperer). The website assists researchers to find jobs outside academia. It had been developed specifically for HDR students, but would also be of interest to academics wanting to leave academia.

The committee believed this would be of great interest to HDRs, so had subscribed to the program for two years. It was noted that the subscription would allow everyone with a Monash domain to use the site including all undergraduates, graduate students and staff. PostAc would provide free training sessions to students and staff on using the website.

4.2 General Business

4.2.1 MGA Enterprise Agreement

It was announced that the MGA had commenced formal negotiations for the Enterprise Agreement. The Enterprise Agreement was the document that set out the conditions of employment for staff employed with the MGA. Two members from the MGAEC were required to sit on the Consultation Committee that would oversee the negotiations. Interest was called for from members to participate in this process which was likely to run over the course of the next few months, and Caitlyn and Maddie expressed interest.

4.2.2 MGA Sustainability program

The MGA was continuing to transition into a more sustainable and accountable organisation. The sustainability program was being overseen by the HR & Finance Officer, Jessica Fimmel, in conjunction with interested staff, committee members and students. Members interested in the MGA's sustainable future and who wanted to contribute ideas and have some input into the MGA's transition were invited to join the MGA Sustainability Advisory Group which would be held on the first Tuesday of every month at 3pm. The next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday 1 March, 3pm. Interested members were invited to email Jessica directly on jessica.fimmel@monash.edu.

4.2.3 HDR policy changes

It was noted that a number of policy changes adversely affecting HDRs, some of which had been previously raised by MGA student reps at GRC, were now being pursued through MGA staff discussions with MGRO staff, namely:

- The timing and process affecting a student's decision to appeal and/or accept a conversion to Masters in the instance where they have failed a milestone;
- The breadth of powers of the Chair of the appeal panel when a student has failed a milestone;
- The restrictions of the oncampus attendance requirements for HDR students; and
- The eligibility criterion for GRCA that prevents students entering their fourth year from being able to apply for the award.

5. Membership

5.1 Email motions for cooption

It was noted that on 21 December 2021, members were asked to vote by email on two cooption matters which had been held over from the December MGHAEC meeting. Nine members responded to the call to vote by the due date and on 13 January 2022 both Amir Abyaneh and Melinda Krebsz were elected to general representative positions on the MGAEC with Amir to take up the International Student Officer's position as of 26 February 2022.

5.2 Applications for the Vice-President position

Interest was called for to take up the vacant Vice-President's position. Melinda Krebsz nominated herself and was seconded by Caitlyn. There were no further nominees. An anonymous vote was taken and Melinda was declared elected to the position of Vice-President on the MGAEC. Melinda was congratulated by the committee.

6. Next meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held in March 2022 at a time and date to be confirmed.