

## Meeting 03/2022

A meeting of the **Monash Graduate Association (MGA) Executive Committee** was held from 5.30pm – 7.00pm, Wednesday 27 April 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, David Nash, Karyn Low, Philip Kairns, Amir Abyaneh, Melinda Krebsz, Maddie Herath, Sahampath Hettiarachchi
Apologies	No apologies received.
Observers	Emily Pryor, David Tuck, Luke Sutherland, Mikel Moss, Jon Hines, Dannica Batoon, Fleur Gao, Estelle Wallingford.
In attendance	Jenny Reeder, Janice Boey

Caitlyn welcomed observers to the meeting.

#### 1.3 Consideration of the agenda

No items were added.

### 2. Minutes and Action sheet

#### 2.1 Minutes of meeting 02/2022 for confirmation

There were no corrections to the minutes.

It was moved:

*That the minutes of MGAEC March meeting 02/2022 be confirmed.*

Moved: Phil Kairns

Seconded: Karyn Low

Carried.

#### 2.2 Action sheet

Noted.

### 3. Reports – 5.45pm

#### 3.1 President's report

Noted.

#### 3.2 Members' reports

Noted. In addition to the written reports:

Karyn explained that the university planned to extend the hybrid model of teaching for the remainder of the year, with a mix of online and on campus deliveries. While this would be uniform across all Australian campuses, each international campus would operate in a different way in order to accommodate their local situation.

Saham reported that he had been working with the two graduate students casually employed by the MGA at the off-campus site of the Monash Medical Centre (MMC) where a large number of graduate students from the MNHS Faculty were permanently located. Saham had met with Janice and Jenny as part of his recent induction, and he was hoping to plan an event in the coming weeks.

Elnaz noted that she had participated in the MGA Supervisor of the Year award, and had been in touch with graduate students located at Clayton campus to provide support.

### **3.3 Staff report**

Noted.

### **3.4 March 2022 profit and loss report**

Noted.

### **3.5 MGAEC meeting attendance records**

Noted.

### **3.6 MGA Sustainability report**

Noted.

### **3.7 Reports from reps on university committees**

All graduate students who held a graduate representative position on a university or faculty committee had been invited to attend this meeting as part of the MGA Council. Caitlyn invited the graduate representatives on university committees to introduce themselves and speak about any issues that had been raised through their respective committees.

David Tuck, Standing Committee on Mental Health (SCMH) noted the Thrive project that provided an online repository of information about mental health, designed for students by the university. David mentioned the HDR version of the Thrive project that was currently under development, and was being supported by the MGA. He suggested that it was important for students to know the difference between feeling a bit overwhelmed and having a serious mental health problem, and that this should be addressed by improving the mental health education of the university student population.

Emily Pryor, Graduate Research Committee (GRC) explained that the GRC was the overarching committee for HDR matters, and had positions for two HDR reps. The new Chair had been very consultative and very welcoming of student feedback. For 2022 the GRC had focused on several areas including: industry and internships; the effectiveness of the central and faculty graduate research support structures; and the strategic plan for 2030. The GRC Chair had held a number of consultations with GRC members and individual HDR representatives from faculties to seek feedback on what Monash had to do to meet the 2030 strategic plan goals, including going back to look at what a PhD should look like, what the role of professional development should be in a PhD, and what students wanted to see changed or implemented. Emily explained that the funding universities received for PhD

completions was now higher for PhDs that included an internship than for PhDs without, thus placing pressure on universities to introduce internships into PhDs.

Saham noted that while internships were usually for a short period of time, there was an informal link between internships and eventual employment; industries were likely to offer employment to a student after a successful internship. This meant that industries preferred domestic students over international students even for internships, because they viewed internship holders as potential employees, and did not want to deal with visa complications should they want them to remain on as an employee. Employers were often unaware of the automatic 3 year visa extensions granted to international PhD students. Emily agreed to take this feedback to GRC.

Mikel Moss, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (DIC) introduced himself and invited graduate students to contact him with any equity issues.

Jon Hines, Faculty Business & Economics Graduate Research Committee reported that he had met with the Dean, and had been holding extensive discussions with various graduate student groups through the faculty. From those consultations Jon had developed an HDR Student Strategy report, which he intended to present to the faculty.

Luke Sutherland, Faculty of Engineering Graduate Research Committee reported on a program in his faculty where HDR students were based in-situ with industry partners and worked in tandem with university research. New enrolments started soon, and students either came with an industry partner or were partnered through Monash. Luke believed this to be a good program that helped students develop real world professional skills. He noted that with travel grants now starting to open up, students would be able to more easily conduct international research projects.

Dannica Batoon, Faculty of Arts Education Committee introduced herself and noted that she had only recently been appointed, so had not yet attended a meeting.

Phil Kairns, Sexual Health Committee and Diversity Respectful Committees introduced himself noting that he was also the MGAEC Queer Officer.

Melinda Krebs, Athena Swann Committee introduced herself noting that she was also the MGAEC Vice-President.

David Nash, PPA representative introduced himself noting that he was also the MGAEC Parkville campus representative.

The remaining MGAEC members and staff briefly introduced themselves to the university committee graduate representatives. Caitlyn thanked the graduate representatives for attending the MGAEC meeting and for their work over the last year on behalf of the graduate community.

#### **4. Business**

##### **4.1 Business arising**

###### **4.1.1 CAPA ACM update**

Maddie explained that the CAPA issue has been ongoing and remained unresolved. The MGA and GSA position was that there was not enough notice provided in order for the election to go ahead, but the AGM Chair would not allow any discussion on

the matter. In the subsequent CAPA AGM Maddie and other constituent members left in protest, leaving the meeting inquorate, but the meeting continued regardless and nominees for the CAPA committee were declared elected to their respective office-bearer positions. The MGAEC recognised that there were various political factions at play and that this was complicating the matter, and expressed their disappointment in the politicisation of the CAPA processes.

The committee agreed that they would wait to see how the situation played out, and decide on whether or not to continue associating with CAPA depending on the outcome.

#### **4.1.2 Food relief program with NHH**

The committee were informed that the joint MGA/NHH food relief program had taken off in the last three weeks, with graduate students enthusiastic recipients of the free meals. The program would commence again when Term 2 resumed. The MGA had also advertised for volunteers to help with this program and the NHH had subsequently recruited four new volunteers from the student population, and were currently inducting them through the volunteer program.

The Victorian Government funding received by the NHH for this program would allow the program to run until June 2022. The program was open to all people living and working in the local area, which encompassed the Clayton campus of Monash University. Given the high number of students accessing the program, the committee was asked to consider donating funding to extend the program.

It was moved:

*That the MGA donate \$5000 to the NHH for the purposes of extending the Friday food relief program.*

Moved: Saham Hettiarachchi

Seconded: Melinda Krebsz

Carried.

#### **4.1.3 Statement on Ukrainian-Russian war**

The committee thanked Phil and Caitlyn for drafting the MGA statement on the Ukraine/Russia conflict, to be used in MGA communications, as follows:

The Monash Graduate Association (MGA) offers its support to all graduate students affected by the Russia-Ukraine conflict. We acknowledge and share in the fears and concerns of graduate students from all regions of conflict, and those with family and friends in affected areas.

Further, we support the freedom and human rights of all people and stand in solidarity with those affected by conflict irrespective of nationality or place of residence.

We understand that the graduate community may be distressed by the escalating conflict, and we remind graduate students to reach out to the MGA should support be required at any stage.

## **4.2 General Business**

#### **4.2.1 Mental Health vending machine**

The committee noted that as part of the mental health promotion of Mindful May, the MGA was renting a mental health vending machine and rotating it through each of the four campuses for a fixed period. The machine contained products developed by psychologists and was designed to raise awareness of mental health in a fun and educational manner. The money raised from the machine would be donated to the Victorian-based mental health charity [Orygen](https://www.orygen.org.au) which produced research focussed on the mental health of university students, such as in their 2017 report:

<https://www.orygen.org.au/Policy/University-Mental-Health-Framework>

#### **4.2.2 MGA Annual General Meeting**

Members were reminded that the MGA AGM would be held on Thursday 19 May, from 3pm – 4pm by zoom. Members were required to submit a written report covering the past 12 months for inclusion in the AGM agenda papers, due by Monday 16 May 2022. A request for the reports and examples of last year's member reports would be circulated to members by email.

MGAEC members were also encouraged to attend the AGM, to provide graduate constituents with the opportunity to meet their representatives.

Any changes to the constitution needed to be submitted to the AGM as a motion in order to be passed. It was noted that motions on any matter could be submitted by the MGAEC or individual graduate students provided they were received by the due date (02/05/2022) to allow them to be posted on the website for 14 days prior to the AGM. All motions passed by the AGM were binding on the MGAEC.

#### **4.2.3 MGA report on GPG Satisfaction**

It was reported that MGA Research Officer Ryan Edwards had analysed the data from the MGA 2021 survey of graduate students and produced a report on Graduate Coursework Satisfaction, noted by members in the attachment, as well as detailed GPG reports for each faculty. Ryan would start work on producing a similar set of reports for HDRs from the same 2021 data. Copies of the central report and faculty reports would be placed on the MGA reports webpage once finalised:

<https://mga.monash.edu/your-voice/reports-feedback/>

All reports would be tabled at the relevant university committees, sent to senior managers and used to lobby for change.

### **5. Membership**

The committee noted that a ballot by email was conducted after the March meeting to determine the applications for cooption. Eight members responded and the results were declared on 29 March 2022 as follows:

#### Motion 1

That the creation of the two new staff positions of Graduate Policy Officer and OHS & Facilities Officer be approved.

**Carried.**

#### Motion 2

That Ummatul Siddique be coopted to the position of Peninsula Campus representative on the MGAEC for the remainder of the 2021/2022 term of office.

**Motion lost.**

Motion 3

That Sumayyia Abassi be coopted to the position of Coursework Education Officer on the MGAEC for the remainder of the 2021/2022 term of office.

**Motion lost.**

Motion 4

That Sahampath Hettiarachchi be coopted to the position of General member on the MGAEC for the remainder of the 2021/2022 term of office.

**Carried.**

Motion 5

Please cast a vote for either

1. Shaira Nasari or
2. Gagan Chordiya or
3. Abstain (neither)

to be coopted to the Caulfield campus representative position.

**Motion lost, no candidate elected.**

**6. Next meeting**

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