

Meeting 04/2022

A meeting of the **Monash Graduate Association (MGA) Executive Committee**
was held from 5.30pm – 7.00pm, Thursday 26 May 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, Karyn Low, Amir Abyaneh, Melinda Krebsz, Phil Kairns, Sahampath Hettiarachchi
Apologies: David Nash, J. Maria Lammerding (invited incoming MGAEC member).
Observers: Incoming committee members - Mengyuan Wen (Lily), Sarah May, Ziyi Huang (Rose), Sonia Daga, Maggie Gendy, Ram Anumanth.
In attendance: Jenny Reeder, Janice Boey, Zuzana Quinn

Caitlyn welcomed the incoming committee members as observers to the meeting and asked everyone present to introduce themselves.

1.3 Consideration of the agenda

The following two items were added: 4.2.8 UMAC event; and 4.2.9 MGA debit card authorisation.

2. Minutes and Action sheet

2.1 Minutes of meeting 03/2022 for confirmation

There were no corrections to the minutes.

It was moved:

That the minutes of MGAEC April meeting 03/2022 be confirmed.

Moved: Karyn Low

Seconded: Phil Kairns

Carried.

2.2 Action sheet

Noted.

3. Reports

3.1 President's report

Noted.

Caitlyn added that the MGA had been approached by representatives of the Law Student Society who were looking into concerns about lecture recordings. The issue was that the Law Faculty would not send links to students to attend lectures remotely, even if they were sick with Covid. After some pressure from the students and the MGA the Faculty announced that the links to core lectures would now be made available to those unable to attend, but this service would not be extended to electives.

3.2 Members' reports

Noted. In addition to the written reports:

Saham added that he and Phil had attended the MGA meeting with Building, Property and Development (BPD) and Saham had raised an issue noted by a student at the MGA Annual General Meeting, namely that when students worked overnight on campus the parking timed out and if they forgot to restart it after midnight, they could end up with a parking ticket the following day. BPD responded that they would raise this issue with the parking provider Cello to see if they could modify the app to include a reminder for students who had parking running past midnight.

3.3 Staff report

Noted.

3.4 April 2022 profit and loss report

Noted.

3.5 MGAEC meeting attendance records

Noted.

3.6 MGA Sustainability report

Held over.

4. Business

4.1 Business arising

4.1.1 MGA Annual General Meeting

It was noted that apart from the aforementioned parking concern, the key complaint raised at the AGM was about graduate students' lack of awareness of the MGA, and a request that the MGA better promote the organisation and its services to students. It was explained that the MGA did not have access to graduate student emails and relied on students self-subscribing. A commitment was made to improving advertising and investigating additional ways to work with the university in promoting the MGA.

4.1.2 MGAEC 2022-2023 election results

Members were informed that the MGAEC 2022-2023 elections had concluded and 13 members had been elected. Incoming members had been contacted and invited to attend the AGM, May and June meetings. A date had been set for an induction and the June meeting had been scheduled for 2pm-4pm, Monday 27 June 2022, to be held in person on Caulfield Campus. The report from the Returning Officer was attached.

Caitlyn congratulated incoming members on their election to the MGAEC for 2022/23. Incoming members were encouraged to attend the next meeting in June where the office-bearer elections would be conducted. Caitlyn also noted that the 2022/23 committee would be the first committee to operate face-to-face in two years.

4.2 General Business

4.2.1 MGA members' retreat

It was proposed that an overnight retreat be held for incoming and outgoing members of the committee (approximately 25 students) to plan for the next year's work – the first in-person retreat after two years of operating the committee remotely. The retreat would be held at a hotel with conference facilities, located within two hours drive of Melbourne. It was proposed to be held in August. All travel, accommodation and food would be provided and funded by the MGA.

It was proposed

That a maximum of \$25,000 be allocated to fund the MGAEC retreat.

Moved: Amir Abyenah

Seconded: Phil Kairns

Carried.

4.2.2 Budget adjustments

The committee was presented with budget adjustments for approval. For the benefit of the incoming committee, it was explained that while the 2022 budget had been approved by the committee in its entirety in December 2021, any expenditure beyond the amount approved for each budget line item required committee approval. The following budget adjustments were requested: Recruitment \$1,000; Marketing \$70,000; OHS \$1,000; End-of-year childcare grant \$80,000. The committee briefly discussed the requested adjustments.

It was moved:

That the 2022 MGA budget be adjusted to increase the nominated line items by the following amounts: Recruitment \$1,000; Marketing \$70,000; OHS \$1,000; and End-of-year childcare grant \$80,000.

Moved: Karyn

Seconded: Phil

Carried.

4.2.3 Mid-year orientation

Janice outlined the plans for MGA mid-year orientation activities. There would be a university-run online delivery in the week prior to orientation, where the MGA would create a virtual booth and deliver events with graduate student content. The university was looking for student feedback on content for a series of "how to" videos which would feature students. Karyn recommended a video on how to read room numbers and building codes and letters. Janice asked that any further feedback be sent directly to her.

The MGA in-person delivery during orientation week included orientation sessions, physical booths, campus tours, and social sessions. Large events would be run on Clayton and Caulfield campuses, with smaller deliveries on Peninsula and Parkville.

The university was also looking for feedback from the MGA on university emails going out to newly enrolled students. Members had previously been asked to review university communications sent out to GPG and provide suggestions for further inclusions. Any suggestions should be emailed to Janice.

4.2.4 MGA rewards program

It was announced that the MGA would launch a trial “MGA rewards” program to attract graduates to become more involved with the MGA. All MGA services would remain available and free to all graduate students; the rewards program would be at an additional cost to graduate students who wanted to be more involved with the MGA and would provide participating students with an exclusive line of MGA clothing items and merchandise and various discount deals.

The committee approved the trial on the understanding that all current core services to graduate students remained free to access and did not require membership.

4.2.5 Muslim prayer room

The students of the Monash University Islamic Society (MUIS), which sits under the Clayton undergraduate student association MSA, had composed a letter to the Vice-Chancellor about the state of the Muslim Prayer rooms. MUIS members sought advice from the MGA to help them in their efforts. The MGA were invited to be a signatory to the letter and Caitlyn agreed on behalf of the MGAEC given the large number of Muslim graduate students in our cohort.

4.2.6 University review of camps

Members were informed that the DVC(Education) had expressed concern about the level of serious misconduct occurring at student-led overnight camps, and had commissioned a review of the camps to determine whether they should continue to be endorsed and supported by the university. The review would be conducted by an external consultant. The MGA would endeavour to ensure that overnight conferences and activities organised by graduate student groups would not be caught up in what is likely to be a proposed ban.

It was suggested that rather than simply banning all overnight camps, an investigation should take place into the culture operating within some student groups.

4.2.7 NTEU campaign

The National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) which was the union recognised as representing university staff, had requested the MGA’s support of their campaign to improve pay conditions for casual tutors, see details here:

<https://www.megaphone.org.au/petitions/monash-must-pay-for-student-consultations>

It was noted that while the MGA represented graduates on issues relating to their studies, the MGA did not have the authority to represent graduate students on matters of employment. The committee discussed in length the underlying concern that many graduates were suffering financially.

The MGA had been working for some time on increasing the stipend and was currently putting together a paper on HDR poverty to go to the GRC, with the specific recommendation that the stipend be increased. Phil volunteered to contribute a section to the paper noting that the problem of tutors being underpaid was a contributing factor to the financial distress of HDR students.

4.2.8 UMAC events

It was announced that the university marketing section had approached the MGA to partner with them to deliver a graduate-specific event with an international student focus. Ideas has been suggested such as a family day event, or a networking event. The event would be funded by the university, but conceived in collaboration with the MGA. Caitlyn called for interest to be involved in the event and Sonia, Ram, Karyn, Amir, Saham, Phil and Maggie volunteered.

4.2.9 MGA debit card authorisation

It was noted that the MGA had recently employed a part-time staff member, Belinda Mackay, to be located on Peninsula campus. As such, the committee was requested to approve the issuing of an additional debit card for use by Belinda.

It was moved:

That the MGAEC approve the issuing of a debit card operating from the MGA bank account BSB 033-181 A/C 345 569 to Belinda Mackay.

Moved: Phil

Seconded: Karyn

Carried.

5. Membership

The committee noted the resignation of Merve O’Keefe from the MGAEC. Caitlyn thanked Merve for her work in the role of Women’s Officer, and for running so many educative and supportive events for women graduates.

6. Next meeting

Caitlyn reminded members that the next meeting was the final meeting for the 2021-2022 committee’s term of office, and would be held from 2pm – 4pm, 27 June 2022 in-person on Caulfield campus.

Incoming members of the MGAEC 2022-2023 would also be in attendance and elections for OB positions would be held during the June meeting.