



KPA OGM

Thursday 15th February 2018

Chancellors Building: CBA 1.021– 5pm

Committee in attendance:

President – Ieuan Smith

Vice President – George Blake

Association Secretary – John Wootton

Activities Officer – Christopher Murphy

Equality and Diversity Officer – Sophia Taha

International Officer – Kristine Vu

Student Trustee – Liam Searle

1. Apologies

Apologies from GB who could not attend this meeting

2. Minutes of Last Meeting

There were no issues with the minutes from the previous meeting

3. Motions

(Motions were moved up the agenda)

UCU Solidarity: Pension Changes Affect Us Just As Much

Proposer: JW Seconded by: CM

In summary, it is proposed that the Keele Postgraduate Association officially takes a position in support of the UCU Strike Action and encourages PhD students to join UCU and the strike action.

RB: The changes to the pension scheme were not articulated correctly in the motion and this should be amended so as to be factually accurate.

Proposer accepted the changes

RB also pointed out the additional stake that postgraduates have in the consequences of the proposed USS pension change in that if people never retire then there will be no jobs for early career academics to take.

Further discussion on the practicalities involved with strike action will be saved for any other business (section 7).

The room voted on the motion:

Votes:

For: 13

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

Motion Passed.

4. KPA Committee Updates and Elections

IS informed the membership that elections were approaching and encouraged everyone to think about the possibility of running for a position within the association. A brief overview of the positions available, their pay, roles and responsibilities was provided by IS.

5. KPA Updates

(This section was moved up the agenda)

6. Proposed Constitutional Changes

The proposed constitutional changes were explained in full by IS

The removal of the Financial Secretary means that the positions' responsibilities have been redistributed in the following ways:

- The President is now responsible for the setting of budgets, organisation of, and proper record keeping for, all financial dealings of the Association.
- The President shall chair the Finance and Assets Committee as set out in Standing Order and Procedure 2.3.3.
- The Chair of the Finance and Assets Management Committee shall be the Chair of the Board of Trustees or his delegate.
- The Association Coordinator can act as the Chief Returning Officer when it is not possible for the Association Secretary to do so.

Changes to the article 7 indemnity amendments were made at the request of University Council.

An external trustee that can vote has been added on the Finance and Assets Management Committee.

The room voted on the constitutional changes (quoracy was met and a two third majority vote was required to pass the changes):

Votes:

For: 19

Against: 0

Abstain: 5

Changes Passed

7. Officer Reports

President's Report:

National voice: We did not have a national voice when I started last year as Vice-President but now we regularly meet other postgraduate officers from across the country to discuss postgraduate issues. Whilst our membership are also members of the NUS, NUS are historically not very effective at Postgraduate representation. The national voice for PGs will continue to be a priority. Earlier this year the paid members of the committee went to a postgraduate conference where IS and GB gave a presentation on the nature of postgraduate funding – this is just one of the ways that we are contributing to the development of the national voice. We expect to see its continued growth in the coming years.

PGT Fees: The average of 40% increase to PGT fees will be going ahead in spite of resistance from the KPA. The University justifies this by appealing to the cost that it takes to deliver a postgraduate course; they often make a loss. They also want to fall in line with what their benchmark universities charge. Because of lobbying done by the KPA, the University has amended the alumni discount to a 20% reduction of fees opposed to a flat £1000 discount, this will be a minimum 40% increase on the original alumni discount.. They're also going to increase the bursary threshold limit – so you can enjoy more bursaries at the same time. This rise in fees has also lead to many aspects of the Postgraduate taught courses to be reviewed. For example, the issue that people studying level at level 7 being taught a level 6 module.

Study Spaces: Given the relative success of the last overnight study space in the Darwin building there has been some significant buy-in from the University to provide more study spaces for students.

The Presidential Report: IS asked members if they were reading the presidential report because it details the most significant ways that the KPA has been representing its membership over the last month. This is to ensure that the membership is well informed about the current affairs of the KPA and to encourage communication between the KPA and its membership regarding important social or educational issues.

Postgraduate Research Representation: Currently, there is no postgraduate research hierarchy in place that makes sense. The lack of a coherent system in place means that important issues can be delayed or missed entirely. This is unacceptable and must be addressed. The nature and complexity of this issue is that it may need to be passed onto the next committee.

Association Secretary's report:

Communication: The main focus has been on producing, expanding and improving the weekly digest as well as thinking of better ways to communicate with the membership. The digest seems to be read with increasing frequency based on word of mouth (and a show of hands within the OGM itself). This increase in usage makes it all the more important to get right as a significant means of improving the postgraduate community through organised events and news.

Green Week: This is a notice to say that the KPA is getting involved in Green Week. There will be a "lights out" event on the Monday; a discount (to be confirmed*) for selected vegetarian/vegan dishes; a KPA Talk with a theme appropriate to the week will also be taking place. An invitation for students to get involved or put forward their ideas was extended to the membership

Postgrad Induction: JW has also been involved in consulting University management regarding the organisation and implementation of PGR and PGT induction processes for the coming

September. This has involved ensuring that the appropriate services are sign posted at first contact, ensuring that faculty and university inductions do not contradict each other and ensuring that there is a balance between educational provisions and the facilitation of social integration.

Equality and Diversity Officer:

ST explains her drop-in sessions, making sure everyone is okay through conversation. She has also advocated for visually impaired students on campus. Getting every situation viewed critically. There's still a lot of work to be done and there is a desire to work more on mental health.

IS: We are waiting on a HEFCE Bid request for funding which will determine the nature of the mental health provisions across campus whilst acknowledging the different set of challenges that postgraduates must face.

Activities Officer:

CM: KV (International Officer) and I have recently organised a Postgraduate event to a restaurant in Newcastle-under-Lyme called Basmati. It was very well attended with around 15 people and has encouraged us to do more similar events moving forward, so look out for them as they come up.

8. KPA Updates

IS: The process of phasing out level 6 courses at level 7 will take place over a few years. The raise on fees has helped to convince the University to do this and has led to an increase in the bursary threshold – increasing the amount a student can receive in bursaries. It has also led to an increased discount for Keele alumni moving onto a master's course at Keele.

The Communications motion from the previous OGM has been addressed and its actions followed through. The issue is now thought to be solved and this is in part because of the motion.

The motion for extending the membership: Not had time to work on this as yet but we have support from the university once the initial stages of this process begin.

ST: Should we extend our membership to mature students?

IS: We represent postgraduate education – however we have informally supported them historically. We could remind them that Associate membership is an option for them– this could allow them to attend our events, join our mailing lists.

9. Any Other Business

No Other Business

End of Meeting