



Union Council Report

Graduate Students' Association (GSA) 2012/2013 (6th February 2013)

President's Report

New members of the GSA executive committee:

GSA AWO Humanities/Co-curricular: Boshuo Guo (Acting)

GSA Sport's Officer: Umar Minhas (Acting)

GSA Public Relations & Marketing Office: James Tull (Acting)

Paul and I introduced the GSA to the PG community during the welcome week talks. I presented at S. Ken, Hammersmith and department inductions. Natasha presented at Silwood.

Meetings attended:

Master's quality committee meetings Nov 12 & Jan 13

PG Professional skills development committee Nov 2012

Rep training Nov 2012

Research quality committee meeting Oct 2012

Dinner with Debra Humphris (Pro-Rector), Doug & GSA AWOs

Student centric meeting Jan 13

Meeting with Dennis Wright

Strategic Education Committee Nov 2012

Union council

Union executive meetings

I sit on a working party to provide clear policy or guidelines outlining the level and type of training that Graduate Teaching Assistants should receive. There are examples of very good practice by some Departments or Faculties and our aim is to agree common guidelines for the College. The first meeting was in Jan and the second will be in Feb.

Doug and I had a meeting with Andrew George re Simon's (*et al*) proposal on extending PGR student status. At this meeting we also discussed better record keeping and assessment of supervisor-student meetings to help detect early warning signs that usually lead to student anxiety and late thesis submissions - to overcome this problem we thought it would be useful to use the software that Doug and Becky are proposing to be developed for UG (Personal Tutor Logging System).

I have also been involved in all social event organisations.

I have arranged PG student representatives for various meetings esp. for PG periodic reviews of departments. This involves reading a quantity of information

about the provision, visiting the Department, with the other assessors, for a day, and writing a report for the College.

Master's Programmes in the Department of Surgery & Cancer – Hammersmith – Maryam 7 Feb 9.00 – 17.00

Medicine PGT review – Hammersmith – Simon 17 May - 9.00 – 16.30

NHLI research review – Royal Brompton Campus – Nick 25 June - 9.00 – 17.00

Business School research review – South Kensington – Cheryl Lai 10 May - 9.00 – 17.00

Chemistry research review – South Kensington – Natasha 28 May - 9.00 – 17.00

Mechanical Engineering research review – South Kensington – Natalie 5 July - 9.00 – 17.00

Life Sciences (S.Ken) PG Master's review – South Kensington – Ross 16 July - 9.00 – 16.30

Imperial - A*STAR programme review - South Kensington – Amy 15 March 9.00 – 17.00

Doug and I have been invited to talk at the next education day in April 2013.

I'm helping James at the graduate school organise talks for master's level students who are interested in doing PhDs (possibly on 20th March). Myself and other PhD students will be speaking to the group about our PhD experiences.

I have also responded to a media request for a postgraduate case study. I answered a number of questions regarding postgraduate study for a journalist from The Independent who was doing a supplement on PG studies.

Helen (AWO Life Sciences) and I had a meeting with Jane (Director Commercial services), Jemma (Head of catering operations) and the project manager re new developments in the Holland Club space. They were very keen to meet the rest of the GSA team so I am currently organising a meeting on the 13th Feb.

GSA elections will be in the summer.

Events Officer's Report

Events organised to date:

- GSA Cinema Night showing "Anna Karenina" - co-ordinated with IC Cinema. This had a good turnout
- GSA Excel Workshop - this was a free event run by the Events Officer in a lecture theatre. Over 200 people showed interest and around 120-150 people turned up. Feedback was positive and people requested for more academic workshops
- GSA Christmas Party - This was held at the Piccadilly Institute and tickets cost £25 each which included a buffet and club access. This event did not attract much interest and we are looking into ways to improve event attractiveness.

Events in the planning stage:

- GSA Cinema Night on Friday 8th Feb, showing Taken 2
- Web-editing workshop in the near future, led by Nick from the GSA
- Possibly a day/weekend trip to a location outside London - this was ranked as the top choice of events from a survey completed by post-grads last term

Problems:

- Turnout has been an issue with post-graduates
- This may be due to lack of time, lack of interest or tickets being too expensive
- We will continue hosting the cinema nights as it has been successful, and possibilities of informal free events or events with low ticket prices
- We will host more formal / academic activities: e.g. IT workshops

AWO Physical Sciences' Report

The first term of the 2012/2013 academic year has gone well, with issues being resolved within the departments. A meeting with the departmental reps has been postponed, due to a change of Physics department rep and a lack of a Mathematics rep. I have asked the Mathematics course representatives to see if they are happy to elect a departmental rep from within themselves.

AWO Life Sciences' Report

Recent Activity:

In life Sciences, there has always been a divide between the students at the Silwood campus, and those at South Kensington. I have been attempting to address this, and to bring the postgraduate community together through:

- Establishing communication with the postgraduate representatives (Masters and PhD) at both campuses
- Helping to organise for postgraduates and staff from South Kensington to join the Silwood Park football club

I have also been involved in committees and activities to promote postgraduate welfare and interests in Imperial, for example:

- Attending Union Council meetings, Education & Representation Board meetings, and the ICT student forum
- Volunteering for the Masters' Quality Committee and the PostGraduate Research Quality Committee
- Attending Student Rep Week to talk to students in person, and to help find out how their courses could be improved
- Helping to organise postgraduate socials

Future Work:

More needs to be done to address the lack of socialisation /mingling between Life Sciences students and between postgraduate students in general. I will continue to address these issues through the organisation of social events, and through communication with students and staff.

AWO Business Report

Since the last Union Council Report, I have been chiefly working on academic representation of the Business School and not at all on welfare. No requests regarding the latter have come my way so that should be a good sign.

On the 28th of November, I organized an open discussion with representatives from the masters and the MBA. The goal of the meeting was to gain insight into any problems or dissatisfactions that were present and to seek to address those. Appendix 1 provides a short overview of the e-mails I sent out to programme directors following that meeting (on 19/12/2012). Unfortunately, I only got a reply from one of the mailed people. This is perhaps due in part to the unfortunate timing of the e-mail just before the break.

Furthermore, I have had meetings with the GSA Executive Committee, attended the MCQ meeting (I missed the last QAAC due to a PhD deadline) and have been active in pushing two issues forward.

1) Main issue that we are debating is the extension of the PGR student status to 4 years. At the moment many students lose their student status after 3.5 years although they have not yet finished their PhD. This issue will be presented at the Union Council on the 12th of February with a view of getting it on the Senate's table by the end of February.

- a. I attended the PGR SSC in the Business School and got support from the PhD programme director on this matter
- b. I discussed this issue in some depth with Andrew George and Debra Humphries during different meetings

2) Following up on a question from a bio-engineering PhD student rep, we set up a meeting with Andrew George to discuss the possibility of introducing a new or improved assessment scheme for PGR supervision. The quality of supervision seems to be insufficient at some departments and students have trouble in finding ways to express their concerns without ending up in conflict with the department and their current supervisors. This has been discussed with Caroline Hargreaves as well and some additional information has recently been sent to the student rep in question. The problem is however not yet solved.

AWO Engineering's Report

I have been in contact in most Engineering department's DepReps and administrative officers to get the full list of student representatives (year group and research area), in particular:

* Most of the missing positions now have been filled, but the information remains to be very difficult to get out of the department (especially for research reps and the departments do not have PG DepReps

- Chemical Engineering will have the new PG reps selected in Jan 2013 - Held first meeting with Engineering PG reps, summary available on Wiki <https://wiki.imperial.ac.uk/display/gsa/AWC+Engineering+meeting+minutes+-+12-12-2012>

Council
12 February 2013

Agenda item 15

GSA Executive Committee members:

GSA President - Maryam Habibzay

GSA Vice-President - Natasha Strydom

GSA Secretary - Amy Hippard (Acting)

GSA Treasurer - James Sudlow

GSA Events Officer - Maija-lisa Han

GSA Representation Officer - Sarah Percival

GSA AWO (Academic & Welfare Officer) Medicine - Natalie Kempston

GSA AWO Physical Sciences - Ross Webster

GSA AWO Engineering - Nicholas Ng

GSA AWO Business School -Simon Schillebeeckx (Acting)

GSA AWO Life Sciences – Helen Pennington (Acting)

Appendix 1: Student Feedback

TO: Ebrahim Mohamed (MBA)

For the EMBA, there was one general request from the representative and that was to ensure that all lectures were videocaptured. Given that many students live abroad and fly in for classes, this is extremely important for when a class is missed. Especially since there seem to be occasional classes or events on weekdays. These should surely be recorded on video and ideally broadcasted online live (perhaps even with an interactive scheme so that distant learners could actually engage).

TO: Marco Mongiello (IEM, MGMT1, MGMT2)

There were two general requests.

- Timing of coursework feedback should be stuck to and announced upon handing in the coursework. Both for Sankalp's OB course and your own accounting course, students felt feedback came rather late
- Students would like to have smaller groups for the tutorials. They would feel more comfortable asking questions and getting involved when the groups would be smaller

Another interesting remark came from a MGMT rep who said the Business School was still largely overshadowed by the engineering school when it comes to identity building. He found this particularly troublesome in the job hunt as all potential employers seem to tie ICL directly to engineers & scientists. An "engineer-less identity" would be a benefit.

TO: Colin Love (SM)

- In general students are very satisfied with the course overall, although many complained about the digital economy and marketing innovation lecturers. Especially the latter (Paola Criscuela) was perceived as quite messy (slides and readings changing all the time) and it was not clear what to take away from the lectures. Some (English) students also complained they sometimes felt lost in translation.
- Students suggested that costs of books could optionally be added to the tuition fees and then provided by the College. The same suggestion was made by ESB students (and books are already provided for the Finance students) so I think this is worth taking up in the future

TO: Nigel Meade (Finance, RMFE)

- Many students complained about the calculators given, especially those that do not do the CFA find the given calculator cumbersome. Some allowed diversity would be appreciated
 - o Many seem to use a scientific calculator that does not have more functions than the allowed one and cannot be coded either.
- Due to the timing of the exams, some students argued there was insufficient time to revise. This was aggravated by late assessment centres (in the job market)
- Course works were regularly handed back too late
- There were some complaints about the TAs with regards to the online quizzes that lack documentation and contained errors and missing information.
 - o I discussed this with some of the TAs and there seem to be some collaboration issues between the three TAs who were all teaching different subgroups.
- The lecturer for the maths course was perceived to be quite bad in the beginning but got better in the end, so comments were mixed
- Group selection was a key issue: Some groups felt they were strongly disadvantaged because they did not have a member with in-depth programming knowledge.

Students would like that in the future group division is such that at least every group has a member with programming knowledge

- Additionally (or instead), they were interested in more matlab classes that prepare students adequately for the assignments.

I heard from the matlab TAs that the preparation of their course was quite flawed as they were misinformed about what was expected of them and about the amount of knowledge students already had. This is definitely something for the administration to take up next year I guess

TO: Anjali Bakhru (ESB)

- Main problem was with books: Some books (e.g. Blanchart, basic economics & Principles of Marketing) are assigned as reading material but not available in the library. Students are told that the masters programmes are going digital and would hence appreciate all books to be available as e-books.
 - It was proposed to add a “book purchasing” option to the enrolment at Imperial, so that students who want could buy the books through College before their year starts
- There were some diverging complaints regarding lecturers. The lecturer for “management accounting” was overall not well received and seems to need basic IT training (powerpoint, word...). She was also deemed as “too nice”. Compliments were abundant for Angela from Strategic Marketing, while James Sefton’s macro-economics was perceived as being “too difficult” and not enough time had been given for the coursework
- Some students expressed disappointment about the size of the class. Apparently they were told the group would consist of between 35-50 students – victims of the ESB success I guess
- Sponsoring of VISAs. This was a really important issue for many students. While they understand the college might not be able to force companies to sponsor VISAs, it could do more to either select companies for career fairs that do sponsor VISAs and it should announce which companies sponsor VISAs and which don’t before students go to the fairs.