



GSU

IMPERIAL GRADUATE
STUDENTS' UNION

Activity Report to Imperial College Union Council

June 2021

By Zixiao Wang

President of Graduate Students' Union (GSU)

Overview:

Due to the impact of Covid-19, honestly speaking, this academic year is difficult for us. We had to suspend all in-person activities and meeting, this generate significant impacts for students' engagements and peers' communications.

Meanwhile, the Covid-19 also exposed some potential problems those are worth enough to reflect to improve our future works, this will be mentioned in this report.

As the GSU President, in general, I spent around 17 to 20 hours on GSU works every week (the required time by Union is 10 hours weekly), which includes 8 to 10 hours' meetings at College level committees and broads (sometimes I also attend some faculty level committee meetings) and Union colleagues, 5 hours' meeting preparation (this includes reading the papers, prepare the comments, suggestions and questions for College senior leaders and talk with students about their opinions towards specific college policy). Further, I spent 5 hours dealing with other GSU related works, including responding the emails from students, college and union colleagues, editing the GSU presidents' email to PG Community and having in person/online meeting with students to provide suggestions (Most of them are PhD students having troubles with their supervisors, which made themselves fail one of a PhD milestones (ESA or LSR) and find difficult to complete the degree in time).

Meeting:

The GSU president attend college, faculty and departmental level meetings on behalf of the PG communities. Several highlighted meetings include:

- (1) **Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC)** meeting on 26th May 2021 to discuss the issues of academic regulations, study abroad task, student casework (include student complaints and amendments to the fitness to study procedure), postgraduate taught annual monitoring and degree outcomes statement.
- (2) **Programmes Committees** on Tuesday 18th May 2021 to discuss the new programme proposals (BSc Biomedical Technology Ventures, MRes AI and Machine Learning, MSc Applied Paediatrics and MSc Computational Genomics) and review the MSc Business Analytics (on-campus and online) courses.
- (3) **Postgraduate research quality committees** on 12th May 2021 to review the update of PG (MPhil and PhD) regulations. There is one point here we want to highlight: Within the paper titled "*UPDATE OF RESEARCH DEGREE REGULATIONS*", it was mentioned "*Students who wish to retain access to College facilities whilst engaged in writing up their thesis may register for a 12-month writing up period. A registration fee of £200.00 will be payable. A student who still has experimental work to perform at this stage cannot move onto writing up status and will continue to pay full fees*". This means the PhD students who are in final year (writing-up period) will not be allowed to lab unless they pay the full tuition fee. The GSU President did not agree and believed the PhD students who are in writing-up should still be granted with lab work permission. That was because additional experimental data are always required during thesis writing period to better support the arguments, and a banning of lab work during writing-up period would only damage one's thesis quality.
- (4) **Senate** on 19th May 2021 to discuss the issues of Covid-19 response, admissions update, vision for education and student experience and preventing harassment and sexual misconduct towards

students and approve the reports from Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee, Prizes and Medal Awarded, the appointment of external examiners and the awards of degrees. During the meeting, the GSU President clearly highlighted that most students (PG and UG) want in-person teaching and learning, that was because virtual study brought a lot troubles for communication and the quality of feedbacks. The GSU President also highlighted the in-person learning/ lab should prioritise the MSc students this summer, as this is the only opportunity for them to enjoy the campus life at imperial before the end of their programmes.

GSU Vice President (representation) resignation:

GSU Vice President Lintong Li announced to resign due to his terrible eye diseases on Monday 19th April 2021. His resignation letter and medical report attached in Appendix 1 and 2.

Solution: After an internal discussion within GSU committee, GSU Vice-President (research)-elect Tianhao Zhang started his role earlier on 1st June 2021 as a supplement. 2 hours' training was provided to Tianhao by GSU president on 12th May to facilitate him taking the postgraduate representation responsibility.

Finance:

The next year's GSU budget plan had been submitted and wait for the approval and feedbacks from Union.

Matters for discussion:

Based on this year's working experience as GSU President, several points we want to raise:

- (1) A by-law to deal with the sleeping people who had zero contribution over the year might be required, including a clear criteria to assess people's contribution.
- (2) We need more help/attention from Union communication team to spread the email to PG community to improve their engagements.
- (3) A committee need to be created by Union (probably collaborate with the College) to deal with the individual cases of PhD students' complaint. Under the existing mechanism, the PhD student's complaints raised to departments usually did not receive enough attention, a better solution might be raising the issues to college levels.

Acknowledgement:

Huge thanks to all the volunteers and staffs worked closely with GSU to improve postgraduate students' well-being in this year, special appreciation to Union President Abhijay and Deputy President Michaela.

Congratulation to all who had been successfully elected/ re-elected with a leadership role in next academic year, looking forwards to seeing you next year.

Finally, Goodluck for your final examinations and projects, I wish you a good result.

Appendix 1

The resignation letter from Lintong Li (ex-GSU Vice President representation)

Dear Zixiao,

Please accept this email as a formal notification that I am resigning from the role of GSU Vice President (Representation). My last day in office will be 30th April.

I really enjoyed the time during the past few months to advocate for postgraduate issues, this not only improved my skills of communication and leadership, but also provided me with opportunity to meet new people (even though online).

I feel very apologised for the inconvenience that I have brought to you and the committee, and I wish all you best in the future.

Sincerely,

Lintong Li