

## **Union of UEA Students Purpose:**

"To enrich the life of every UEA student"



## **Minutes of the joint meeting of Student Officer Committee**

### **and the Graduate Students' Association Committee**

**24 January 2014**

### **Summary**

#### **The meeting agreed to add the following points to the draft agreement between UUEAS and the GSA**

- If due to the changes to FTO structure, the GSA have to take on more non-academic services, this will be made known to the University so changes might be made to the allocation of funding.
- The GSA will remain independent
- The GSA will provide social and recreational services to postgraduates
- The current changes will not override any previous agreements between the GSA and UUEAS
- The GSA President will remain on Union Council and as a voting member of SOC
- The agreement between UUEAS and SUSS will only be changed by mutual agreement
- Position of graduands wishing to stand for office to be clarified and taken to Union Council as a proposed Constitutional Amendment
- Draft agreement with the changes made at the current meeting to be made publically available before the Referendum and to be circulated to the GSA Committee, SOC and Union Council.
- Agreed that the Referendum would go ahead as planned but that changes would be made to the background information regarding the changes to the proposal as to the Part Time Officer structure.

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## **Minutes of the joint meeting of Student Officer Committee and the Graduate Students' Association Committee**

**31 January 2014**

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### **SOC Voting Members present:**

Eunice Opare-Addo (Ethnic Minorities Officer), Bintu Foday (Community and Student Rights Officer), Daniel Delargy (Students with Disabilities Officer), Louise Withers Green (Academic Officer), Rosie Rawle (Communications Officer), Tu An Ngo (International Officer), Lauren Sloan (Ethical Issues Officer), Joe Levell (Finance Officer).

### **GSA Members present:**

Kimberley Hirst-Jones (UUEAS Postgraduate Officer and GSA President), David Cutting (GSA Committee Member), Leonie Dackhan (GSA Committee Member), John Taylor (GSA Quizmaster)

### **Chair**

Joe Raynes (Non Portfolio Officer).

### **In attendance:**

Tony Moore (Representation Support Worker)

### **Emergency Meeting**

J Raynes took the Chair of the joint meeting and thanked the GSA Committee members for attending.

**Chair** noted the emergency meeting had been called after the Postgraduate Officer had raised concerns at the previous day's meeting of SOC concerning the Postgraduate Academic Officer FTO role and the abolition of the Postgraduate PTO role as proposed in the forthcoming Referendum.

**J Levell** noted that, since that meeting, the Chief Executive and the GSA President had met and the Chief Executive had drafted proposals, circulated to the present meeting, which it was hoped would address the GSA's concerns.

**K Hirst-Jones** noted that a key concern of the GSA had been over the splitting of the present Postgraduate Officer role; the academic aspect of the role had been adequately catered for by the creation of the FTO role but the wider aspects of the role had been left to the GSA. She believed that for the GSA to cater for non-academic services it needed adequate financial support and its own designated social space and this needed to be guaranteed before they could agree to the axing of the PTO position. She stated that, if the GSA represented postgraduate students, it had to remain independent of UUEAS. She noted the GSA position that agreement to the proposals on the Referendum would not override any current formal agreements between the GSA and UUEAS.

**D Cutting** welcomed the agreement in the paper that the GSA President would be invited to SOC but noted that, currently, they had an ex officio place on Union Council and the GSA would like this to remain. Chair clarified that the arrangement would be that the GSA President would be a voting member of SOC with a place on Council.

**J Taylor** noted that the GSA held representative roles within the University and that any agreement between UUEAS and the GSA would not alter the relationship between the GSA and the University as, although UUEAS was proposing to alter its own Constitution, the GSA Constitution would remain unchanged. He believed the proposed changes to postgraduate representation were the most radical in UUEAS' history and it would have been desirable for postgraduates, at large, to have been consulted about how they wanted to be represented but they had not been given that opportunity. He argued that the proposal in the Referendum was only one of a whole swathe of possible options for postgraduate representation and that postgraduates, themselves, would not be deciding how they were represented as, electorally, they were vastly outnumbered by undergraduates. He noted that, even if every postgraduate voted no in the Referendum, it might still be passed. He wondered whether the postgraduate question might be separated from the main Referendum.

**B Foday**, as DRO, noted these concerns and her wish that she had had the impact on postgraduates laid out as clearly as this before SOC had voted to call the Referendum.

**K Hirst-Jones** noted that the GSA was not against the extension of PG representation with the new FTO position; their problem was with the way the question had been framed and the process in general.

**J Levell** noted that there was agreement in the room as to the following: the GSA President to be a voting member of SOC with a place on Council and that there should be no changes to any previous agreements between UUEAS and the GSA. As to whether postgraduate representation should be the subjected of a separate referendum question, he noted this was a matter for the DRO but he did not see this as a problem.

**Chair** noted that, for the future, how the GSA represented PGs alongside

UUEAS would be a matter, solely, for the GSA to decide and this would no doubt be worked out as the new roles became active.

**J Taylor** noted that it was not just the GSA and UUEAS involved in these matters, the University was also involved. He noted there was a triangular relationship and any change to the balance of the relationship would have to include the University. He noted, for example, if due to the changes the GSA took on more non-academic services, this would need to be made known to the University so changes might be made to the allocation of funding.

**Chair** noted that there was agreement that this should be the case and that this would be added to the actions listed in the Chief Executive's paper.

**J Taylor** noted that the current agreement between the GSA and UUEAS' subsidiary company should not be changed without the agreement of both parties and he asked that this be minuted.

*The meeting agreed that:*

*The GSA will remain independent*

*The GSA will provide social and recreational services to postgraduates*

*The current changes will not override any previous agreements between the GSA and UUEAS*

*The GSA President will remain on Union Council and as a voting member of SOC*

*The agreement between UUEAS and SUSS will only be changed by mutual agreement*

**T A Ngo** asked how the proposed changes would affect the GSA's representation on University Committees.

**K Hirst-Jones** noted that this had been discussed and some of the positions might be better filled by the new PG Academic Officer but this would be a matter for the GSA Committee to decide.

**D Cutting** noted that the intention was for the new PG Academic Officer to be invited to sit on the GSA Committee.

**T A Ngo** wondered whether taking out the academic representation part of the Officer role would affect GSA funding.

**L Withers Green** noted that the University were acutely sensitive to the issue of the Block Grant and it was highly unlikely they would cut the £6,000 funding to the GSA.

**D Cutting** noted that just because the PG Academic Officer post had been created did not mean that GSA members would cease to be involved in academic matters.

**L Sloan** noted the paper envisaged more staff support for postgraduate

services; given the UUEAS budget constraints, she wondered how feasible this would be. She also wondered how realistic the statement was that the University would not cut GSA funding.

**K Hirst-Jones** noted it would be good for UUEAS to place in writing its commitment to provide more PG support and this could be included in the Chief Executive's paper.

**Chair** noted that there had always been the understanding the new FTO roles would come with increased staff support and there was no reason why the PG role would be any different.

**J Taylor** noted that UUEAS could not decide on the GSA's funding; this was a matter for the GSA and the University; though he welcomed UUEAS' funding of the PG post.

**D Cutting** welcomed the extra funding for the PG post.

**K Hirst-Jones** noted that the freeing up of the GSA President's time by the taking away of the academic part of their duties would mean a huge increase in resources available for work in other areas.

**J Taylor** noted there had been concerns raised over the space the GSA currently occupied in Union House, known as the Grad Bar. He asked whether any changes were planned as to how the Grad Bar was run as a result of the FTO restructuring.

**J Levell** noted this was not in the document as the matter was totally unrelated. He further noted the GSA President was a member of the building redevelopment focus group and the group would be looking at better PG provision.

**Chair** noted that a key message from the What If? Consultation had been the desire of students to keep the Grad Bar.

**J Taylor** believed there was an error in the document as to the position of graduands wishing to stand for office and the position would need to be resolved by an amendment to the UUEAS constitution.

**Chair** noted that this would be taken to the next meeting of Union Council.

**J Taylor** noted this would also need to be changes in the preamble to the Referendum question; as the changes to the Part Time Officer structure as, given the agreement, reached earlier in the meeting, would need to be deleted.

**Chair** noted the Chief Executive's document with the changes made at the current meeting would need to be made publically available before the Referendum.

**R Rawle** noted the changes would have to form part of all the publicity material for the Referendum.

**L Withers Green** noted to J Taylor that to have a separate question in the Referendum on the PG role would mean postponing the whole process for a week which would have a knock-on effect with the General Election which would mean, as a consequence, any changes to the FTO structure would be postponed for another year.

*The meeting discussed the question of postponing the Referendum and concluded that this would be impractical if the intention was for the result of the Referendum to change the FTO structure in time for the General Election*

**J Taylor** reiterated his belief that the PG role was just a footnote to wider questions in the Referendum and had been decided upon without proper consultation. He believed the consultation with PGs had been minimal as only three PG students had taken part.

**J Levell** believed this to be a harsh statement; PG representation was not a footnote it was an integral part of the whole restructure. As to the consultation, he noted the dates had been sent to the GSA in the final weeks of the previous semester and there had been offers of help to the GSA for planning and organising consultation with their members. He noted that these offers had not been taken up and he believed that this should be acknowledged by the GSA. He noted the GSA had agreed how important the new post was and urged them to get involved in the Referendum campaign. He noted the Constitution was a mutable document and any changes that the GSA thought were necessary could be put to Council at an early stage.

**K Hirst-Jones** asked that her concerns over the consultation be minuted as to expect one Part Time Officer to hold extensive consultations with a quarter of the student population whilst keeping up their own academic work commitments was absurd. She reminded the meeting that her fellow Part Time Officer, the Mature Students' Officer, who had taken a leading role in the consultation, had recently resigned because he felt the lack of support from UUEAS in trying to fulfil his duties had affected his academic work. In future consultations, she concluded that UUEAS must learn from this experience and work closely with the GSA. She believed, however, that despite these issues, the advantage to PG students of having the new PG FTO role was so great that the GSA Committee would support the Referendum going ahead as planned.

**D Cutting** believed the case for a PG Officer to be compelling and noted lessons from the consultation process would need to be taken on board but that the GSA Committee would be actively taking part in the Referendum campaign.

*The meeting agreed that the Referendum would go ahead as planned but that changes would be made to the background information*

*regarding the changes to the proposal as to the Part Time Officer structure.*

*The meeting agreed that the Chief Executive's paper with the agreed changes would be circulated to the GSA Committee, SOC and Union Council.*

The GSA members left the meeting.

B Foday, as DRO, asked SOC to consider two questions regarding the Referendum.

Firstly, she noted questions had been raised as to whether Question 2 which was an amendment to a Constitutional Amendment should require a simple or a two-thirds majority of members voting.

Secondly, she noted that there were no specific regulations within the Bye-Laws for the conduct of campaigns during a Referendum. She proposed that she would transpose rules concerning candidates in the Election Regulations to campaigns in the Referendum.

*SOC agreed that the first question would be referred to the Trustee Board and that the second would be referred to the Returning Officer.*