

Ustinov College GCR General Meeting Minutes



7:30 p.m., 22/03/20, Microsoft Teams

1. Apologies: AL, SK, SH, ML

2. Issues arising from the last minutes

a. **Approval of Minutes from the last meeting**

Minutes from the General Meeting held on 09/02/20 – *passed on a general aye*

b. **Results of Elections following the last meeting:**

Communications Officer: Maggie Lou

Livers Out Representative: Shreya Khandelwal

Ball Secretary: Amy Bartlett

Ents Officer: Jordan Warren

3. **Questions for the Principal Sarah Prescott**

a. **Q:** Clause 1.6 of the 2019-20 Licence to Occupy University Accommodation states: *In the event that during the course of this Agreement you are required to move to another Room on a permanent basis in accordance with the provisions of clause 1.4, you shall be entitled to terminate this Agreement by giving the University five (5) days written notice. Under such circumstances this Agreement shall be considered to terminate on expiry of said notice period and you will be released from your obligation to pay any further proportion of the Licence Fee.*

Can you confirm that students from Ustinov (or other colleges) that are:

a) Required to move to another room as part of the consolidation of college accommodation, or

b) Have their accommodation reallocated to another student as part of the college accommodation

will be entitled to terminate their Licence to Occupy University Accommodation and will no longer be required to pay any further unused proportion of the Licence Fee without penalty if they no longer wish to reside in University accommodation?

A: *Any questions regarding contracts or legalities will all have to be passed on to the legal services so I can't give you an answer on them unfortunately. If you send these questions to me I can send them to the people who can answer them directly. The legal services have proactively asked us to send them any questions/issues relating to contracts or the legality of the process and they will look to respond to them and*

put out statements to all students.

- b. **Q:** Is anything being discussed about what to do for international students if they find themselves stuck past their move-out date in September?

A: At the moment the process is looking at the immediate pressing emergency and dealing with things as they come up. There is obviously a long-term plan but at the moment the plan is over the next few weeks and months to get things in place and sorted out as much as possible. There is a central operations team who are dealing with it, which is why I don't have any extra information for you because we are getting it from them as and when the process is planned out. They have told us there will be an update later this week so we have been told in colleges to wait until this comes in and I will disseminate this information as it comes in.

- c. **Q:** Seeing as we are all meant to be self-isolating if we can, I would be worried if a large group of students and their parents were to come up to College at the same time to pack and move out. Would college consider making something like a Google doc / form asking students what days and times they can come up, and then organising people into shifts? I.e. only letting small groups in at a time to pack and use the college facilities? This would greatly minimise risk.

A: This is a really good idea and it's obviously something that we are definitely looking at and thinking about, which is why it has taken a couple of days to pull the whole plan together; operationally and logistically it's a challenge. They're very mindful of PhD guidance, and the number of students involved. There are 4 colleges that are being used as the consolidation colleges so it is being spread across the 4 colleges. What the order is, where they plan where to put people, how they manage that, again they are planning all this centrally and working around the clock and through weekends to get this sorted and get the information out as fast as possible. As soon as I know, you'll all know.

- d. **Q:** Unfortunately, there are many PhD students across the university that are either in continuation, self-funded with little contingency, or funded PhDs that will have to extend without funding due to the Covid-19 crisis. For many, I'm sure that financial pressures together with the pressures of self isolating 'alone', being apart from loved ones in this difficult time, etc. will not be good for students' mental health and well-being. Please can you ask what if any additional funding is going to be made available to students in this position? I am deeply concerned that the mental health of some of my friends and colleagues who may be affected by this issue and it's important that the university acts early to mitigate these effects.

A: If anyone has any financial concerns, send them through to Ustinov.studentsupport@durham.ac.uk and we are dealing directly with the financial support officer of the University who is picking up any financial support queries if we can't answer them. I realise that may be frustrating as I can't give answers directly but we are referring the queries directly to teams that should be able to answer them. Bearing in mind, those people are also working within a very rapidly changing situation and the information is changing daily; people are doing the very best they can. Answers will come as soon as we have them.

- e. **Q:** Several other Universities are suspending their costs for Term 3 accommodation, as it looks unlikely that students will return. Is Durham looking at this, given the advice given asking students to not return and their rooms may be taken and used by other students?

A: *I know this is actively under discussion and they are considering this. I can't give an answer for the University but I know there is communication coming and that will hopefully be this week.*

- f. **Q:** In the FAQ sheet provided, someone has asked how you can ensure our belongings will be protected. Can you provide a copy of your insurance details for this or the mechanism of how their stuff will be moved, as this is causing a lot of stress amongst students?

A: *I understand that I really do, as do all the Principals. We don't currently have the answer to that; as part of the bigger picture they are looking at this and will put that information out but it hasn't come to us yet so we are just waiting for the next couple of days. I have been sending daily emails this week with any updates that come in and I will continue to do that, so please bear with me. If I can say one thing for the team and the college, we're all doing our best and trying to do a good job and get the information out to you as fast as possible; as soon as it comes in, we will send it.*

- g. **Q:** Do we have any idea if Summer Congregation is still going to take place yet?

A: *This is still under discussion. The situation is changing day by day so they are waiting to see what the guidance will be nearer the time. If for any reason it is cancelled, then there will be other alternatives put in place and they are looking at that actively. We have a Congregations Office that I know is discussing this. Again, once any decision is made, it will be very dependent on changing circumstances and how the public health crisis goes. We will obviously get that information out as soon as we can.*

- h. **Q:** I am worried that the college would be encouraging people who have underlying health conditions, such as asthma, to make a long and potentially risking journey. It would be a great reassurance if provisions and advice were clearly set for these individuals.

A: *If students can't leave for whatever reason then the University is absolutely committed to supporting them. They have their room; they are absolutely being supported in colleges. We haven't come to the decision of college consolidation lightly; it is not something the University wanted to do. It has been forces beyond our control. We don't have the operational resources to keep all the colleges open for the numbers of students that still have to stay. If students can't leave for whatever reason (border closures in their own country, flight problems, financial concerns), we are trying to maximise the support by consolidating them into areas we know we can operationally resource and provide the health and safety. A lot of these students are in catered colleges where there are no kitchens at all so they have no space to cook for themselves, which is why the decision has had to be taken to try and consolidate primarily into self-catered colleges where there are kitchens and en-suite bedrooms so people have the facilities.*

- i. **Q:** Would the University be supporting students who want to cancel their License to Occupy Agreement due to them basically being forced to move out of the room?

A: *Nobody is being forced to move out, if people can leave then they are being told to go and take as many belongings as possible. If they need to stay in their room, they are very much able to do that.*

Q: *But if someone moves into their room and their belongings are moved out of their room, surely they have been moved out of their room?*

A: *In an emergency situation, if the students that are being consolidated need to use every single room across the 4 colleges, and that's by no means a guarantee at this point (they are still collating numbers of students that need to be here), if students wish to cancel their contracts they would need to do that in the normal way by contacting their college. At the moment, the advice is very much that the termination charges stand as they are, that is not to say that it will stay that way. The information will hopefully come out this week. At the time of this meeting, the contract is as it is there hasn't been any further information published, but that's coming. If people can hold tight for the next couple of days there will be more information.*

- j. Q:** *Could we please also all be sent a copy of the license agreement-as the website to retrieve this is currently not working?*

A: *If students want to email Ustinov.studentsupport@durham.ac.uk a copy of the contract can be sent out. A number of staff read these emails so this is the best email to get in touch for any queries. The only reason it is not currently online is because they change every year and the new one has not yet been uploaded.*

- k. Q:** *Are students staying expected to share our own cooking supplies to those moving into our flats? Or will the college provide materials for them?*

A: *This will all be taken into account and the information shared this week. I know there are a lot of students/flats who are taking precautions and social distancing themselves, which is a little bit different to self-isolating on symptomatic grounds. If anyone is on medical grounds self-isolating and unwell, food boxes are being prepared and delivered to their rooms so they do not need to access the kitchens. There is no expectation that anyone will have to share their items or belongings.*

- l. Q:** *It seems to be the University making a lot of decisions, how much control do you have and what are you doing to push for the rights of Ustinov students in this?*

A: *I think the wider picture is this is a global health crisis and unfortunately the University is making decisions that are in response to PHE and government advice. The college is a part of the University and the college heads are being brought up to speed as fast as possible. In terms of the consolidation, there are students in the University currently who are in limited numbers in some colleges because a lot of people have left, they have no catering facilities and potentially they will be very isolated and we simply can't continue to operationally resource them. The staffing across the University is being impacted as it is in many other places in the country and round the world and we just don't have the teams in place. The University has had to make an emergency decision. At this point, of course every principal wants the best for their students but equally we have to be supportive of the wider University initiative to try and support all students and bring them in through this consolidation process. Nobody is saying it is perfect, neither option is brilliant but this is the best option at the moment to make sure that all students are supported.*

- m. Q:** *If college is not holding a lot of the events that were already planned, can we use that money for supplies for the students that may need it?*

A: *That's a lovely idea. Yes there will be resources made available to any students*

that may need it please don't worry. The students won't be left without anything at all. Students that are moving from other rooms will obviously potentially bring their own cooking supplies with them but yes there would be resource provided for anyone who was in need.

Q: *What about medicine and cleaning products as well as just food?*

A: *Medicine is a difficult one as it is individual to each person. I would suggest to anyone who is concerned that they can't access the medicines that they need should email Ustinov.studentsupport@durham.ac.uk because the NHS is responsible in making sure medications get out where prescriptions are necessary. We can give them advice on that and put them in touch with the right people. The central operational teams across the University are looking to make cleaning supplies available for flats that are self-isolating and are cleaning their own flats.*

n. Q: *Is Ustinov going to remain a postgraduate college during this consolidation?*

A: *Ustinov is a postgraduate college. They are moving people from different colleges, I don't know the nature of the students in the other colleges, and I would imagine they are mainly postgraduate as most undergraduates will be gone but there will be a mix. The college is a postgraduate college but the accommodation may need to be used by any student who needs it, it's just the situation we're in.*

o. Q: *Is there anything that those who have moved abroad can do to help?*

A: *If anyone has any ideas of ways to help that would be brilliant, get in touch. If we do have anything that we think we could ask your help for we will email out and ask. It's a huge situation to deal with and I'm very appreciative of the offer of support. If anybody does have any great ideas please do email Ustinov.studentsupport@durham.ac.uk or me and we will look to action those.*

p. Q: *As this is a rapidly changing situation, would it be possible to do a future one of these to get more information?*

A: *Yes I am more than happy to come online again, but legal and contractual queries would still get referred. I don't know if we could get someone from the legal team involved but I will definitely ask the question.*

q. Any other questions not answered will be emailed to Sarah after this meeting and she will either respond directly or forward them on to the correct people. They will also be emailed round to everyone so they are aware of what queries have been raised. A copy of the license agreement has also been posted in the chat if anyone wants to see this.

4. Reports from Officers

a. President [DM]

University matters:

At the JCR PresComm, we had a visit from Chis Finnemore and Deborah Moller-Andersen with an update on the Review of Flexible Workforce (BarStaff Review); the recommendation was to raise the payments to University pay scales. The reason to do this is that the bar facilities are owned by University and therefore want to have

the same system. However, the hidden point is that this extra money will come from a rise in the price of bar products. The additional retail facility in the TLC, a sushi bar, which was the result of a survey made in 2017 with less than 300 replies from students, has been postponed due to a fry fan problem.

In a meeting with PVC Jeremy Cook, numerous concerns from all Common Room Presidents about the DSU were discussed:

- Discounting of the RON candidate in the recent elections will cause distrust of the SU amongst the wider student body. In our view, the discounting of the RON candidate goes against prior precedence and a disproportionate response to the original allegation made involving a President; there were no prior steps to solve the issue before the decision was made to discount the RON candidate. We confirmed that the RON campaign was not directed at the individual candidates, but acknowledged that the election results have taken too long to be published, thus causing distress to the candidates running. We confirmed that the intention of the RON campaign was to alert the SU to the issue surrounding them being representative of the wider student body. We expressed that a breakdown of the results should be published, including those pertaining to the RON candidate.
- We raised concern over the apparent readiness of the SU to use legal action to resolve issues, without consulting opposing parties through proper internal mediation.
- We expressed concern over the SU's ability to represent student views. Currently, the SU represents its own views, while we are individually elected to represent their Common Rooms to the wider University.
- The distribution of university-allocated monies to the SU and Common Rooms was unfair; currently, the former received substantially more funding than the latter.
- SU Officers are often too busy with meetings in the central university to connect with the students they represent (compounded by the fact that they do not live in College, have lots of staff working around them, and have an isolated office space) and therefore we should be able to take a more active role in the SU.
- The University has a formal relationship with the SU, but an informal relationship with the Common Rooms; this should change.
- Lack of information sharing; the SU has access to critical information, but it is seldom shared or discussed with the Common Rooms, greater communication is needed between the SU and Common Rooms. We are concerned that we do not get to hear how we are being represented at university meetings by the SU. We are rarely approached for opinions/feedback outside of our regular PresComm meetings, which are not always attended by a SU representative.
- SU Assembly; a number of issues were raised, a review of the function of Assembly is needed, refocusing of the SU representative role in Colleges is needed. The atmosphere at Assembly is intimidating; anonymous voting has not been allowed, thus causing the issue when votes are cast in terms of SU representatives from the Colleges feeling intimidated. Greater visibility of the motions/selection of the motions is needed pre-Assembly.

- We felt that power-sharing between the SU and Common Rooms needs to be agreed fairly (including representation on key university committees).

- We also raised concern about a number of the incoming Officers and their sincerity in their willingness to work on developing a relationship with the Common Rooms. One of the newly-elected Officers posted on social media a comment including a teasing/derogatory comment about the students who voted for the RON candidate.

College matters:

BPR2 will have the following repercussions on Ustinov College:

- Housekeeping: the frequency and number of staff will not change, implying keeping the annual cleaning.
- Porters: our weekend porters will be the most affected (Jonathan and Ray) since they will lose some hours by changing from a 12-hour shift to an 8-hour shift. The current schedule for them is 6am to 2pm, 2pm to 10pm, and from 10pm to 6am. The new schedule following BPR2 will be 8am to 4pm, 4pm to 12am, and from 12am to 8am, disadvantaging staff leaving at 12am with no public transport available. Some colleges will have an increase in porters as they hold 2 sites; this will not apply to Ustinov despite the fact we have also have a second site.

When PVC Jeremy Cook was asked the reason for the BPR2, his answer was "University Council is asking to make the University more efficient". With this in mind, I have shared an email to all college students asking them to be a part of the "student consultation" by filling in the survey.

About the **Summer BBQ**, our Operations Manager Ian Macdonald had his first meeting with Jayne Dixen, Operations Manager at Collingwood College, and everything is going very well. However, because of the BPR2 and the Covid-19 situation we haven't had an official meeting between both Colleges to start the paperwork.

Our local resident Helen Martin is the ambassador for the Durham running festival and has asked us if Ustinov College would like to have an international team to participate in this event. I will share more information later.

Last but not least, the update on **Covid-19**. As you are aware we are working very hard to continue updating about this situation. It has been a very difficult month for all of us, and we are very sorry that your experience at Ustinov College hasn't been as good as other years. Despite all our efforts to continue with the activities we had planned, we have come to a decision to cancel all our events, including our weekly events. The gym, the bar/cafe and the Observatory have also been closed in line with University guidance. The bar/cafe area is still open but I urge you to keep a high health standard and to follow the procedures mandated by the World Health Organization.

Q: Do you have any numbers as to the distribution of money between common rooms and the SU that you said was 'unfair'?

A: *As far as we know, the SU receives £2 million whilst Common Rooms get less than £200,000 combined.*

Q: What's the next college event that will happen for sure?

A: We will definitely have another virtual meeting! Connor is trying to organise a platform so we can have more social events virtually. We are looking at bringing back the quizzes in an online format but we are still sorting this out.

Q: The emergency health situation has overshadowed an ongoing strike most of us as students have supported in favour of the staff's rights and interests (BPR2). Are we expecting those surveys and opinions of the students to now be viewed as irrelevant because a bigger issue has arisen?

A: I hope not. I can't speak on behalf of the University because they have their own agenda. However, we are pushing to take all the views of the students into consideration. Before the University passes the motion they are going to share it with the presidents so we can see what is happening. The opinions of the staff on this are important to us. Nobody was taking notes in the meeting with the staff when they raised issues so I don't know if the University is going to take into consideration what the staff want. They did also have one-to-one meetings.

Q: Could you provide updates on the UCU strike situation? We do not trust the university not to shuffle it under the carpet.

A: This has to pass through the SU and hopefully they will share the information with us. Yes I can definitely raise this again in my meeting with the pro vice chancellor of colleges. I will push to have more information about that and update you.

b. Treasurer [VB]

Here are some figures for you all to examine our finances. The table shows the money passed in our annual budget for the separate points, our current spending (up to now), and a rough projection that I have calculated. Overall, we should come out within the same £3K loss that was passed as our annual budget though we are naturally hoping to keep it as low as possible.

Item	Annual Budget	Real (up to March)	Projection
GCR Levies	£14,000.00	£11,500.00	£11,600.00
Composition Fee	£14,112.00	£9,724.66	£14,587.00
Induction Week	-£3,470.00	-£2,809.95	-£2,809.95
Formals	-£500.00	£971.30	£500.00
Summer Ball	-£4,750.00	-£1,000.00	-£4,750.00
Late opening parties (6)	-£2,500.00	-£985.00	-£2,500.00
Other parties / events	-£900.00	-£566.26	-£900.00
Family parties	-£700.00	-£352.75	-£500.00
Photography	-£1,600.00	-£948.50	-£1,600.00
Summer BBQ	-£8,000.00		-£8,000.00
Clubs & Socs	£0.00	£3,452.70	£0.00
Trips	-£250.00	£102.00	£0.00
Welfare	-£800.00	-£205.98	-£800.00
Steering	-£1,200.00	-£492.71	-£1,000.00
Pool Tables	£300.00	£417.00	£200.00
Licenses / Insurance	-£7,275.00	-£4,840.42	-£7,602.72
Facilities	-£850.00	-£862.86	-£1,000.00
Vending Machine	£1,000.00	£65.35	£500.00
Coke Machine	£800.00	£1,145.48	£1,500.00
Redundancy	-£500.00		-£500.00

TOTAL	-£3,083.00	£14,314.06	-£3,075.67
-------	------------	------------	------------

What is going better than budgeted:

- Induction week: we saved some money here.
- Formals: due to a large number of non-members attending formals we are at a surplus.
- Family parties: we have been spending a bit less than expected and since the Easter party is not going to happen, I don't expect us to spend much more.
- Trips: careful pricing of tickets has led us to avoid making a loss. Trips are of course cancelled for now, while the Covid-19 situation is ongoing.
- Steering: we have been getting pizza for General Meetings less often than last year and of course online meetings like this one also save money. Thanks to everyone who is attending despite the lack of free food!
- Coke Machine: has been making plenty of money!

What is going worse than budgeted:

- GCR Levies: I have mentioned this before; we unfortunately have fewer GCR members than we hoped to reach. It is currently not looking like the university is planning to switch back to an opt-out system, so we will need to be more careful with our spendings next year.
- Pool tables: just a careful estimate as I expect them to make less money than usual during the ongoing Covid-19 situation, but not a big change. They were recently re-clothed but as you can see, they are still making enough money to afford another re-clothing later in the year.
- Facilities: this is a big one, simply because no separate money was put aside for music / tech purchases so all that plus allotment expenses fall under facilities. We are able to shoulder the expenses but need to structure next year's budget slightly differently.
- Vending Machine: it is close to breaking even at the moment and we are never in danger of making a loss on it, but we are also not making as much money as budgeted. I will continue reminding the Facilities Committee to purchase fewer items that cost us more than 60p apiece.

In other recent news, the Covid-19 situation forced us to cancel our Castle Formal just as we had finished selling tickets for it, so I have been undertaking a lot of refunds. Luckily FIXR is taking care of refunding the online payments and I only had to manage the cash refunds, so that was very helpful. Cash refunds are almost complete, online refunds should come through soon.

Q: If the Summer Ball and/or the BBQ do not happen due to the COVID-19 situation, what would be the impact on the current finances at the end of year?

A: *This will of course be nice on our finances. We have spent a bit of money to reserve the venue for the Summer Ball, which we will not be getting back. If we can see that these events are not going to happen because of COVID-19 then we will not spend money on them; this will be £4000 not spent on the Summer Ball and £8000 not spent on the BBQ, so from a financial viewpoint this is obviously not a problem.*

Q: *How late would purchases for the BBQ/Ball need to be made in order for the events to still happen? How late could you reasonably cancel the event?*

A: *It's a bit of a tricky one especially with the Ball as we would need to sell tickets for it but we are fearing that the time of ticket sales might overlap with the time that quarantine is still going on, even if the situation is better by the time the Ball*

happens. We need to plan this very carefully and we are not going to spend money on anything yet until it is likely that we can go ahead with the events. I can't give you a timeline but we are aware we don't want to spend too much money and waste it. The tech payment for the BBQ at the moment would need to go through next week though but we have raised the question to see if they would be okay with us deciding later (see agenda point b).

c. Vice President [CA]

First the good news: Since the last GM, we had our Stash order arrive, teched for a superb jazz night, and started with my updates to the signs around Sheraton Park. I am also pleased to announce that we have discovered there is a sum of money (£8000) owed to us by the University to cover things we left behind during the transition. With this, I hope that we'll be able to buy a Greenhouse to go with our allotment and then use the remainder to make facilities improvements to make our current buildings as homely as Howlands was. Our treasurer is in the process of claiming this although it may be delayed for obvious reasons.

Unfortunately that has all since been overshadowed by the pandemic. Instead, I am currently helping the rest of the committee to support our students and community during this time. Most of our physical facilities remain closed but we are working on instead adding information to our website and social media to help everyone cope with social distancing and self-isolation, regardless of whether they live in, out or have left Durham. We are also in the process of looking at what we can do to promote contact between everyone, to try and provide alternative means of socialising now that having gatherings in person is not advised - this will hopefully include a revival of our film and quiz nights. Keep an eye on your emails over the next few days and weeks... I am currently working to set up a Discord server to enable people to hang out together and chat whilst either working or procrastinating (like in the bar) and if this proves popular, we will look at adding more services to it so that Ustinovians can support each other, stay in touch and be entertained.

d. Bar Steward [AL]

The bar is sadly closed, so no updates there. We had good success with the International Women's day and drag cocktails and plan to pick the best selling cocktails as potential future college drinks. If you really liked one, let me know! We're also very happy to announce that college have been kind enough to pay the bar staff for the shifts that they would have worked had the bar not been closed due to Covid-19. It's this kind of generosity that we need right now and we're very grateful.

e. Clubs and Societies Officer [RR]

Since our last meeting, our sports team have been doing pretty well — the volleyball team played the Varsity against York a few days ago. Against all odds, Ustinov has gained points in the college sports table and is now in penultimate position — with St Chads last, 13 points behind. We are leading the premiership in Volleyball (ex-æquo with John Snow) and in Men's Basketball (ex-æquo with John Snow and Hild & Bede), and we are top of our division in UltimateFrisbee (ex-æquo with Chad's on top of Div 1) and in Women's Badminton (on top of Div 2). We have now officially ratified a Squash Club. We also now have a swimming budget for the creation of a swimming club — although the specifics of how that will work have to be clarified and we will obviously not be able to implement this for some time.

Since the last general meeting, I attended the Team Durham AGM. A number of relevant information was given: college sports' invoices should have gone out by now (if this is relevant to your club); Team Durham currently has a deficit of £164K that will be covered by the university; and the Festival of Sports is planned on June 6th/June 7th — although it is not currently clear what will happen with this now, decisions have not been taken yet.

Sports & societies have been significantly impacted by the ongoing health crisis: all the sports facilities we use — the Durham School, Durham High School for Girls and Maiden Castle — are now closed until further notice and college sports are currently suspended. As all non-essential meetings are to be avoided, clubs and societies' events are to be cancelled until further notice. Due to the significant health risk it poses, the gym has also been closed until further notice. Although there is much uncertainty about the situation, we will advise everyone as soon as the situation changes.

Q: If swimming pools are closed due to coronavirus /if they close soon if they are not already, will the swimming pool budget remain available for when things open up again in the future?

A: *For some reason swimming pools are deemed fairly safe and not closed yet but I suspect this will change. However, the swimming budget should remain available in the future. We were at the stage where the University were asking us for an invoice and we have that in writing so that should be fine.*

f. Communications Officer [ML]

g. Acting DSU Representative [AH]

Hopefully, many of you will have read the report summarising events related to the recent DSU elections. This is too long to go in to now, but I shall provide a summary. The DSU has released the candidates who will be next year's sabbatical officers and trustees. They have not released the electoral breakdown, blaming this delay on the effect of the UCU strikes, and then Covid-19 on the efficiency of CIS. The campaign to re-open nominations (RON) was disqualified after the use of a mailing list that not all candidates have access to, by members of RON's campaign team. In the DSU's standing orders, RON is considered a candidate. Regardless of whether this disqualification was a just interpretation of the electoral procedure, the resulting effect appears to be a clear violation of the electoral procedure. If you voted for RON first in this single transferable election, your vote was not transferred following RON's disqualification, and so your vote was removed. This causes many issues with the declared results and mandates for the upcoming year. Some other colleges are investigating distancing themselves from the DSU. At this time, I don't feel we should take this action, as the DSU provides support and training for some of our exec, notably welfare. We will monitor the situation carefully and see what decisions the DSU takes to rebuild trust and sort out this election. Until then, please give any of the candidates in the DSU who ran our support, as many of them have been put in an unfair and unnecessarily stressful situation, and deserve support.

Q: Where does Ustinov currently stand on disaffiliation from the DSU? Is this a GCR or a college-based decision?

A: *Ustinov's GCR relation with the DSU hasn't, at the moment, changed. If that were to change it would need to be a vote or a referendum and will be something raised at*

a General Meeting and that has not been brought forward as of this time.

Q: What is the timescale for any investigation on the DSU election decision?

A: *It's slightly unclear because no one, not even the SU, fully understand the standing orders and they themselves have admitted they're terrible and need to be completely rewritten. Various members are raising complaints. However, without trying to use the coronavirus as an excuse, a lot of the staff who would normally be in doing this job are at the moment focussing on exams and other things so would probably not be wanting to do an internal review of themselves currently. I can't give you an exact timescale of what is being sorted out and when, sadly, as it could change in days depending on the information we receive from the University. If we receive any more information it will be distributed to the college.*

h. International Officer [SH]

i. Livers Out Representative [SK]

Q: What will be the price if I want to move to Sheraton if I can't stay here in my house?

A: *Alex – you would have to talk to College accommodation for that. We can't give you the most up to date information sorry.*

j. Social Secretary [JI]

A lot of social events have been cancelled. We will update you when we have more information.

Q: Are there any ideas, other than the quiz, for online-based social events that are being organised through the GCR?

A: *Online social events aren't really something I've looked at, and given the ongoing situation with COVID-19 perhaps this is something to consider. The only thing that we are still currently planning is the Summer Ball and Amy has been doing a fantastic job planning it. We have no idea if it still happening unfortunately, or if there will be a contingency for anything else to be planned. Everyone's safety is the most important thing at the minute.*

Alex – Matt Roberts has suggested there is a Google Chrome plug-in for a Netflix watch party so perhaps we could do something like this for film nights. We are already working on this. Connor has also started a Ustinov Discord server, which will allow people to talk together and we are possibly looking at doing some LAN gaming.

Jess Craig - Goose Quizzes from Edinburgh have been streaming nightly pub quizzes on Twitch and using a Google form for teams to record and submit answers - this could be a good format for quiz night!

Alex – Yes this looks like a good possible solution, I will raise it to the quizmasters and we can look into it.

k. Welfare Officer [BR]

Since the last GM we had two pub quizzes, one on sex education and one for International Women's Day. Both were well attended, and we hope you enjoyed

them. We had to postpone our drag show due to last minute changes regarding acts; this was rescheduled to be in May to coincide with Pride but with the current situation that is very unlikely to happen. We will revisit this in a couple of months if circumstances change. We have had a large number of donations to the collection for the local shelters, and any more would be greatly appreciated. We are collecting used clothes, crockery, pots and pans as well as unused toiletries, make-up, tea, coffee and biscuits. We are currently getting in contact with the shelter to see when they want the donations to be made. Please get in touch with me if you wish to make any further donations. On a similar note, food banks are likely to be running short at this time with increased need and many people stockpiling non-perishable goods, which food banks require. If you have any extra dried or tinned non-perishable good that you do not require, please consider donating this. If you are able to and not self-isolating, there is a yellow food bank bin in Santander on North Road and a collection box in the Neville's Cross Sainsbury's and most larger supermarkets. The welfare team has started sending out bi-weekly emails with tips for things you can do while working from home or self-isolating to maintain good mental and physical health. Some of these include information about free things you can do online such as art classes and yoga apps. If you see anything you would like me to share in these emails, please get in touch and I will add them! Finally, if you have any questions or concerns requiring the current situation surrounding the Covid-19 outbreak or any other welfare matter, please get in touch with the welfare team at welfare.ustinovgcr@durham.ac.uk or Ustinov.studentsupport@durham.ac.uk. The welfare team will be able to answer some questions and will be able to signpost you to where you can get more information. We should be looking out for each other and our communities at this time.

5. Agenda Items

a. **Vote on the conformation of Ray Mumford, one of the current mentors, as a trustee of the GCR**

Ray has already passed a vote by the current trustees, but requires a 2/3-majority vote in a General Meeting. Below is a statement from Ray:

"I have 12 years of experience as a Trustee with a Charity called Durham County Carers Support. Working as part of a team I was able to help the Charity to deal with Staff H.R. Issues.

As a Magistrate I worked in all the different Courts in County Durham. I became a Magistrate to get to know people and this certainly opened my eyes to the "reality of life". In the normal Adult Magistrates Court I was elected to be a Court Chairman. I worked in the Youth Court, the Family Court and the High Court sitting with Senior Judges to hear Appeals against Convictions and Sentencing.

I moved to Durham City in 1981 after retiring from the Royal Air Force. Travelling around the world with the RAF enabled me to visit many countries and have a good understanding of life in other countries.

As an Examination Invigilator at Durham University and in local schools I am used to working with young people."

This was put to a vote using a Google docs form link in the Microsoft Teams meeting chat. The motion was passed [22 for, 2 against].

b. Summer BBQ Budget [CA]

While we are still uncertain about the Summer BBQ, if we would like an event to go ahead in the summer, we need to start planning now. At the moment, we still have a venue for the 1st August: Collingwood College. With the current uncertainty, we are aiming to push back financial commitments as late as possible. Booking for entertainments, acts and similar is obviously difficult right now but if things are looking better as we approach the summer then there will hopefully be availability of the sorts of acts and Ents we usually have. Staging and tech requirements need planning out sooner, since these affect risk assessments and other paperwork that will need doing before the event. We are currently unsure how the virus will affect this, but are nevertheless in a position to sketch out plans and budgets.

This is a space to discuss the event and our budgeting for it. The amount we are planning for is £8000, as agreed at the AGM last year. For a breakdown of how we would like to spend this, please see the attached spreadsheet with last year's figures for comparison. Of this, the only cost that we might have to pay up front and soon is the tech category. The tech team are currently communicating with our regular partners here to find out what will happen if the event were unable to go ahead and we will take their responses into account before deciding if we should go ahead with the tech booking.

Unfortunately the tech company have not managed to get back to us yet on whether we could extend the date when we have to pay the £1500 to secure their services (the deadline is currently 26th March). They have promised a response before we would need to pay them. Our hope is that the full amount would be refundable or transferrable to a different event, or that they would delay the deadline for payment to a few months down the line when we have a better idea of if the event would happen. It is currently impossible to tell what things will be like on the 1st August. We believe if it is safe to hold the event then we should, as it would be a time to celebrate and socialise after the end of some months of isolation. The budget as it stands was passed at the AGM. We are in a situation where we need more information before any decision can be made.

Alex B - The current budget was passed at a very different expectation of risk so it is very hard justifying spending £8000 in the current climate.

Connor – The budget is for the event we would like to have, it is not a declaration that we are going to spend £8000 regardless of what happens. At the moment if the event gets cancelled then the absolute maximum financial exposure to us would be around £1500, but hopefully less than this depending on what our tech crew get back to us with. If the response from the tech team were that we have to pay £1500 by the 26th March and this is non-refundable if the event is cancelled, then I would be against paying this and we would have to come to some other arrangement for the BBQ.

Alastair - The point of a BBQ budget this year is that we vote on a breakdown. In particular especially given this situation it would make sense to have a vote. The money in the AGM budget is a completely generic £8,000 but it makes sense to allow the students to vote on a slightly more thorough breakdown, since it is such a large amount of money. This is what we had to do last year.

Vera - We can't really make a decision on this at the moment, as we don't know if we will have a BBQ or not. We don't know if the tech company will allow us to make the

payment later.

Alex - We could pass a motion for the worst-case scenario of spending £1500 next week if we can't change the deadline of the 26th March, and this being non-refundable.

Connor - We should vote on the motion "Should the GCR pay a non-refundable/ non-transferable £1500 to secure a tech team for the summer BBQ on 1st August? Payment deadline is currently 26th March" I don't believe this is a likely scenario (motion outlined above) and until we hear more it is impossible to tell.

Motion: "Should the GCR pay a non-refundable/non-transferable £1500 to secure a tech team for the summer BBQ on 1st August? Payment deadline is currently 26th March"

This motion was put to a vote using a Google docs form – the motion passes [31 for, 7 against, 2 abstentions].

Motion: "If the Summer BBQ can go ahead, do the membership agree with the proposed breakdown of the £8000 presented above in the attached spreadsheet?"
This motion was put to a vote using a Google docs form – the motion passes [15 for, 1 against].

6. Any Other Business

Q: A lot of Master's students will finish their dissertation soon and their travel plans have been disrupted and will need somewhere to stay for a couple of weeks or something. Can Sheraton take them if they need to?

A: *Diana – I will pass this to Sarah as I don't know how this will apply to non-Ustinovians as it will be more difficult to contact college.*

Sarah Prescott – If anyone is in a college that will need to be in accommodation for longer or might need to be moved, they are being asked to contact their own Principals. That information is currently being collated by the central team who are organising things, so I would imagine those students would be brought into that process.

Q: Tom Lennie - As a general point, while it's not the most pressing issue, can we discuss the reliability of college to cater for the health and safety of the college community in light of their failed ability to respond to raised questions regarding the gas leak earlier this year? I think it is also worth pushing the college into giving us more regular updates into their health and safety measures for the upkeep of the college. Whilst the investigation may or may not be ongoing and we haven't heard anything, the important question is where did the lack of communication break down in the investigation?

A: Diana – last time I spoke to college they told us the problem was not written down properly by the porter or the student who reported the leak. If you want to report a problem then you have to go to Reception and tell the porter who writes it down in the notebook so they can pass it on to college. If they didn't write it down then that was basically the problem with the communication.

Q: Kristine – Landlords usually send proof of safety checks on an annual basis. Could we push college to provide these documents by email in case something breaks down?

Diana - I will raise this with Ian, our operations manager, and check if we can get these documents published.

Q: Why isn't the bar space closed, and why do the GCR want to keep it open? It seems like a place in which there is a high risk of transmission of the virus if there were to be an outbreak in college.

A: Diana – It's not our decision to keep it open; college decided to keep it open but asked us to let students know that they have to keep a certain distance away from each other. They have housekeeping cleaning the area frequently to make sure students have an alternative space to study, not necessarily to socialise. College doesn't want to close down everything and just be confined in your room, but if something does happen and we have one case then we close so don't worry.

Alex B - I'm not very happy with that as a decision personally as waiting until we have a confirmed case in college is far too late. I think the GCR should be proactive in pushing for this space to be avoided if you can't control the shut down.

Rayan - Right now the bar space allows people to socialise a little bit, it is very often cleaned and people are leaving distances. It is big enough for people to stay apart and it is better than people meeting sneakily in their kitchens or rooms. Right now it hasn't been flooded with people, there have been at most 4 people there at any one time. If too many people start hanging out there then yes we will revisit but for the time being I don't think it is more unsafe than a kitchen.

Alex B – I think a kitchen has at most 6 or so people from that flat and you can have a wide range of people coming in and out of the bar it isn't the same 4 people all the time so the risk of transmission is inherently higher in the bar space.

Diana - We will discuss this with exec and raise the point with college and update you on any changes. We will definitely consider your point and check with college about what we can do.

Matt - Are the GCR able to shut the bar or does it have to be a college decision?

Diana - The College has to make that decision as they own the space but we can suggest to them that they should close it, otherwise if they want to continue to keep it open we can't do anything against that.

Jess - Have colleges with libraries kept these open (since our bar space is sort of our only equivalent)? I personally would be in favour of the GCR encouraging the college to proactively close the bar. Surely we would rather be overly cautious than have to close it in response to an outbreak in college. Also, encouraging the college to close it frees up our housekeeping staff's time to sanitise the frequently used public spaces, lifts etc. Physical distancing doesn't have to mean we become socially distant and the social aspects that we get from this space can largely be satisfied through other means (and I think we should all keep sharing these apps like the Netflix viewing party etc. as they help prevent loneliness and isolation). Sorry for the long message, just my perspective!

Diana - Some colleges have decided to close their libraries but some still have theirs open; it depends on the decision of the principal of each college. University hasn't currently said we must close down the areas.

Fiona Brewis with an Eco-Rep update

This term I ran a few events, including two pub quizzes and the recycling event with the Green Ustinov and Sheraton Park group to raise awareness. Last term we also donated some oak tree seedlings to a group called Grandparents for Climate Action and they have planted them in a nearby river to try and stop flooding down river. I have also contacted the gardeners and we are rewilding one of the green spaces to the left of Neville House. I have also arranged for a welfare meadow to be planted in September on one of the main spaces in the effort to improve biodiversity on site because a lawn is just a monoculture of grass; there is not much it can do for insects and things. I am also, with some groups in University, writing a module on sustainability intended to start not this year but the next year, going out to a large number of people, educating students on the climate crisis. The University has organised a bunch of groups to look into estates and buildings, the curriculum, and a few other things to see how the University can respond to the climate crisis as it is obviously a pretty pressing issue. I have contacted the sports clubs in the Ustinov group to diverse from Barclays because this is happening across the University and we need to make sure we are not supporting

fossil fuels in our society bank accounts. We took part in the climate strike, which was good to have some postgrad representation. The allotment is quite exciting with lots of developments. We also worked with Arabeth in the café to get the vegan menu printed and made more visible, and the café is also providing us with food waste to compost and coffee grounds for the allotment to prevent slugs getting to plants. The bar is also in the process of switching from single-use plastic cups to multi-use cups that are similar to glass but safe. I am currently trying to arrange the instalment of a pedestrian crossing on the road where Westhouse Avenue meets Potters Bank, where a lot of students living in Ustinov cross every day and it is unsafe with busy traffic. Durham County Council have not been helpful with that so it will probably not get anywhere but it would be good to try and promote walking and safety. I was also in the process of organising a beach clean litter pick with another County Council member, but obviously this has been called off for now. If you have more ideas of ways to improve the site in terms of Ecology then do let me know, thank you!

Bryony – The possibility of us getting a crossing was raised at a PACT (police and community together) meeting at the beginning of the year because it would really help with safety. The answer we were given is that it is incredibly unlikely that we will get a crossing because it is so close to the crossing at the top of the road near the Duke of Wellington. I know this is in the wrong direction for walking to the science site and isn't the most convenient answer but I am guessing this is a similar problem that Fiona is facing with the council.

Fiona – I am going to keep trying to find people to contact about this. Durham County Council does have a plan to deal with the climate emergency and part of this plan is to increase pedestrian crossings where possible to encourage walking.

Rebecca Salthouse
GCR Secretary
22/03/2020