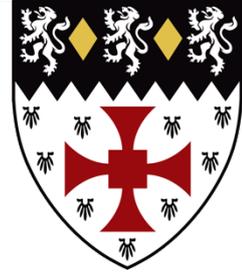


# Ustinov College GCR Exec Meeting

## MINUTES



11:00 am, 28/04/20

1. **Apologies:** SK, JI, ML, AL, RR
2. **Approval of minutes from last meeting.**
  - a. Approval of minutes from the 21/04/20 – *passed on a general aye.*
3. **Matters arising from previous minutes.**
  - a. DM to ask if Ustinov Bar Staff can be included in alcohol awareness for Fresher's Week (if it still goes ahead). *Ongoing*  
DM to talk to Ian and push college to advertise the safety door signs. *Done*
  - b. VB to ask for an update on the transition refund. *Ongoing*
4. **Agenda Items:**
  - a. **Creative writing prize (£100 for the prize, donated by Thom A.) [DM]**

On the talk I had with Thom, one of the things we raised is that we had offered this option to College about a year ago with no success. He is still interested in having this. *It would be best if the GCR just helped to promote the competition and Thom decided on the rules. We need some clarification from Thom about the parameters of the competition. It would be a good idea to go to college about this first. It is a nice idea because it is something people can do from home. AP: DM to talk to college about this and get some clarification from Thom.*
  - b. **Porter request to borrow kettlebell from the gym while it is closed [DM]**

*Jonathan has requested to borrow a kettlebell from the gym to use at home. Emma said she was fine with this. All the equipment in the gym was bought by college but is a replacement for what we had at Howlands and if anything needs replacing it will be up to us to pay for it – we are liable for the equipment. The gym has been completely disinfected and closed so no one is allowed in it. However, college are still accessing the gym for a storage cupboard. It is unfair to let porters borrow something that we do not allow students to, especially as they would be taking it offsite. Having said that, the kettlebell itself is not that valuable and could be easily replaced if anything were to happen to it. Motion to allow a porter to borrow a kettlebell from the gym – this was put to a vote and failed [1 for, 2 against, 2 abstentions].*
  - c. **Online Music Event:**

After seeing what some musicians are doing on social media and the discussion at the BBQ meeting, I think we should look into trying to do a "Ustinov OnLive" (if you have a better pun, please let me know). I've spoken to the tech team and they are up for it although we can't provide any physical support to musicians. We believe

the best format would be to have pre-recorded performances - this does mean performers will be able to record their own sound/ video. It isn't restricted to solo performers although group performance will be more technical to organise. We can offer tech advice and help editing/ mixing but nothing physical (won't be able to lend any gear).

The plan: Pick a date, on a Friday/ Saturday (check GCP for clashes) and contact our regular musicians. If we get a few good responses we can start advertising it publicly which will hopefully get us more performers. The distancing means we aren't restricted to current students or Durhamers. The actual event will feature the recorded performances, interspersed with intros by us. We can also add some discussion with the musicians to pad it out and make people feel present. This could be streamed on Facebook, Youtube, Twitch... allowing people to watch and comment live so that we can respond to them. There is free software available to facilitate this although some testing will be required before the event.

Does anyone have any comments or alternative suggestions? Our Tech Officer is ready to start sounding out performers in the hopes of putting an event together within a few weeks.

*Connor will continue with this plan and also advertise for any volunteers who would like to be involved with the tech and mixing the videos together. Bands could all record videos separately to a backing track or a metronome. The date should be at least 2 weeks after we advertise it to the public.*

## **5. Officer Reports:**

### **a. Bar [AL]**

Nothing to report.

### **b. Clubs & Societies [RR]**

Nothing to report.

### **c. Communications [ML]**

*The Instagram stories are still going and seem to be popular. We could also post more casually on the Instagram stories instead of a whole day if anyone has anything interesting to post such as baking.*

### **d. DSU [AH]**

The investigation into the handling of an accusation against the RON campaign has been concluded by the supervising trustee. While they are unable to overthrow the decision by the returning officers, they do question whether RON should be considered a candidate as currently written in the standing orders. Additionally, they view the decision to remove RON as a candidate before checking whether this would affect secondary votes as deeply unsatisfactory, but technically allowed. The governing documents state that the election must be run using a single transferable vote, but do not clarify what would happen should a candidate be withdrawn.

It is clear that a significant overhaul of the DSU governing documents should be made in collaboration with Assembly, DSU staff and common rooms. This matter will need to be raised at the next Assembly/ open forum. *The next Assembly is looking at being voting members only. This problem was raised at the JCR PressComm meeting*

*with Diana. The contracts of some presidents say they have to be in Assembly, but they cannot vote. Any student should be allowed to attend Assembly. Alex can still attend as he is the registered voting member for Ustinov. They are looking at sharing it on screens so students can still ask questions, but this may cause issues.*

*The online teaching plan was rejected. Term has now started, and classes will all be online for this term. This will affect postgraduates who are teaching so we should keep this in mind. There has been success with postgrads who teach working conditions. There are now fixed term contracts, guaranteed minimum hours, fair pay for each hour worked, training periods paid for, and uni guidance on how long to spend marking assignments. There has also been a significant increase in payment for bar staff up from minimum wage and will be standardised across the University.*

**e. Facilities [CA]**

Vending machine still has plenty of stock so no action needed yet. Perhaps next week depending on delivery timescales.

We had a BBQ meeting at the weekend, our planning for that continues slowly. The current bottleneck is waiting to hear back on staging and extra tech costs to be sure we've budgeted accurately. Once we have some figures there, the rest can be planned out properly. The entertainment providers that Jordan (Ents officer) has contacted have generous enough cancellation/ deposit arrangements that I don't believe it'll be an issue.

**f. Finance [VB]**

Nothing to report.

**g. International Officer [SH]**

*We will send out a welfare email for how to cope with Ramadan during lockdown and ways to do this safely.*

**h. Livers Out Rep [SK]**

Nothing to report.

**i. Social [JI]**

Nothing to report.

**j. Steering [AH]**

Several committee members have volunteered to take over the Instagram which is good. I'll look into dates to hold a full committee meeting on Zoom. *We will start advertising exec positions for next year in about 2 weeks' time. We will also have to talk to people about how to run for positions online as we will not be able to do it in person.*

**k. Welfare [BR]**

I held a welfare drop in on discord last Thursday - no one needed it, but I'll hold another one this Thursday and advertise again from tomorrow.

**l. University/College [DM]**

**University matters:**

From my meeting with Jeremy Cook: if students are abroad and are having problems returning due to cancellation flights and they have not received help from their departments, students can contact the finance office so they can get some help if they have run out of money. University is trying to keep the workload for their College staff, which is not the same as for academics. Housekeeping will rotate, porters are on the minimum amount since most of them are part of the high risk/vulnerable group. Next week University will start looking into casual workers.

From my meeting with Amelia from DSU welfare, she is working to support students who are having problems with landlords (lack of communication) and for those who are finding the financial situation difficult due to an end of scholarship and can't return to their country. I shared this information she asked me to and told students to use their SU advice centre (<https://www.durhamsu.com/advice-and-support>).

From my meeting with Phill Hancock (Community programs), Lynsey Finnermore (Durham Inspire Award), Marek Tokarski (Enterprise and Development) and Toby Hillery (Technical development) from University about WSE, we spoke about the COVID-19 Conundrum Challenge Competition. An email has been sent to students about this on Thursday; the objective is to come up with ideas to help the world emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic and will also be open for postgrads. The WSE is looking into some activities for postgrads, but mainly these activities will be under GCP scholars. However, I will be discussing PGR specific enterprise activities in the coming months with Paul Stafford, PGR Enterprise Manager.

From my meeting with JCR PresComm, we discussed updates from all presidents and how we are dealing with the current situation. Kessia (JCR HB) updated that University is looking to move some HB students next summer, temporarily whilst construction work is going on, and the implications will be that they won't offer spaces for postgrads to live in College. Joe (JCR St. Johns) is looking into passing a disassociation from DSU referendum. We all discussed the current situation with Assembly; Poppy didn't know anything about it and will look into it. We also raised our concern that we are not having a person to really represent the Common Rooms perspective as part of their role in Senate/Council. We asked to have more CR representation and communication on what is going on those meetings. We got the following links:

For minutes of Senate

[https://www.dur.ac.uk/committees/senate/senate\\_documents/](https://www.dur.ac.uk/committees/senate/senate_documents/)

*The most recent available minutes on this site are from February 2019. AP: DM to check with Jeremy about this.*

For minutes of Council

<https://www.dur.ac.uk/committees/council/minutes/>

For a diagram of Committees on Senate and Council

<https://www.dur.ac.uk/committees/diagrams/>

At the end of the meeting, Kessia (JCR HB) shared with us some of the activities they are planning to do for their College day. This includes a ZOOM morning lunch, video from YouTube for a Chaplin to simulate their service of the cathedral they used to have, food menu options will be shared by the JCR exec to students, open mic using

ZOOM and streaming on a YouTube channel, and some contest online. All these activities are part of their traditional college day. *Anyone can join in, Diana will be in there to see what they do.*

**College matters:**

On Thursday, Ian shared that College has 62 students living in College accommodation out of 96 rooms that didn't fill in the form to state their status.

**Exec matters:**

On Friday I finally sent the signed contract to Ramside for Summer Ball 2021. *The date has been confirmed with Ramside.* A copy of this was shared with the treasurer.

After some messages and emails we have concluded to share this message for Gym refunds requests, please feel free to copy and paste:

"Dear member,

GCR activities haven't ceased during the whole COVID-19 situation, we are still working to deliver some activities/support to students, most of them online since we are aware some of our students are already left College accommodation. As we promoted at the beginning of the term, our membership is not just only discounts to formals, it also includes more activities, we managed 4 out of the 6 formals we had planned for this academic year, with 1 still pending on evolution of the situation, as well as all the parties/ Ustinov Live/ gym membership/ Clubs and Societies funding and we are still planning for the BBQ, which is our biggest event.

Unfortunately, we are not able to proceed refunds for the gym. We cannot split the fee into termly use, as students use the gym at different rates throughout the year. I would also like to clarify that the membership cannot be divided into the 3 terms since we are aware that on the last term all our students get less free time, so we have fewer formals and parties, and we give more welfare support for the stress of doing exams/essays or just simply continue their PhD. Additionally, it would be impossible to offer refunds, as these would need to be made in cash, and there is no safe way of doing this at the moment. Hope this information helps and let me know if there is anything we can do to help."

The true story of Peter Platypus by Thom Addinall-Biddulph:

"In 2015-16 we had a very dedicated comms officer, Corinne Wist (this was my first year as DSU Liaison Officer). She suggested in I think late 2015, or might have been early 2015, that we get a mascot, and run a competition for it. So we went ahead with that, the idea was that people could nominate mascots and then whenever anyone bought a drink at the bar they could vote. The options were a platypus (unnamed at this point), Monty the Mound (someone drew a cartoon of the mound that didn't look like a turd at all), King John the lion from Disney's Robin Hood as he was voiced by Peter Ustinov (Disney would've sued us for that as I pointed out), and a cat, which apparently I nominated although I don't remember doing that. Corinne constructed a voting setup with tokens at the bar....the issue was 1) obviously, the bar staff had no way to keep track of whether someone had voted before as it was over several weeks, 2) they quickly stopped bothering so the tokens were just left on the bar with the cups for the options. This meant that anyone could vote as many times as they liked, and I guess the platypus supporters just wanted it more... A Beanie Baby platypus was initially bought to be Peter, but I think Alyssia (GCP Liaison Officer in 2016-17) may have taken that in the end, and the more real looking one

came from Dan Brunsdon who was press secretary. There have I think been at least three of those ones so far...”

While talking with Thom A. I raised the topic of having a wooden-board for our honorary life members (HLM) and past presidents since all the Colleges I have been to have one. He told me that this topic was raised once by Jamie (GCR President before Thom), but there wasn't a follow-up. I would check later on prices and how to get these two lists on board and come back to you. *It would be nice to also have an online list on the website. We would also need to decide where the board would go, which we would need to discuss with Ian, especially if it cannot go anywhere visible enough.* **AP: DM to check with Ian where the board could go.**

List of HLM:

Bill Bryson  
Mike Abson  
Penny Wilson  
Matt Hann  
Nick Cresswell  
Miriah Reynolds  
Mark Owen Jones  
Jesper Pedersen  
Thom Addinall-Biddulph  
Yan Birch  
Tim James  
Jamie Graham  
[After completion of their courses]  
Joseph Farrow

List of GCR Presidents

2005-7: Zubi Al-Zubi  
2007-8: Guy Siviour  
2008-9: Simon Robinson  
2009-10: Lara Wood  
2010-12: Matt Hann  
2012-13: Nick Cresswell  
2013: Adnan Balloch  
2013-14: Justin Nguyen (acting)  
2014-16: Marc Owen Jones  
2016-17: Kirstyn Raitz (started as acting)  
2017-18: Jamie Graham  
2018-19: Tom Pitts

**AP: AH to contact Jamie and check the list of HLMs.**

## 6. AOB

**Termination of college accommodation contract [SH]** – some of us who have moved out are unsure whether we should terminate the contract as we have belongings in our room and want to return at the end of the year if it is at all possible with the ongoing pandemic

situation. There has been discussion into this for PhD students, but this has not been considered for Masters students who may also be in the same position. The best thing to do would be to email college as they sent out an email this morning. It would probably be possible to still rent a room again at the end of the year if it is possible to return so ending the contract at this point would be best financially. If people still have belongings in their rooms, there is a form to fill out giving permission for college to pack up these belongings and store them.

Rebecca Salthouse

GCR Secretary

28/04/20