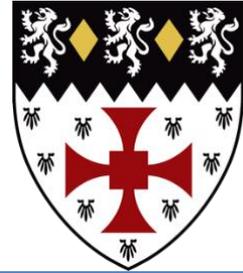


# Ustinov College GCR General Meeting

## Minutes

7:00 pm, 12/07/20

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1. Apologies: *Jl*

Present: *25 at the beginning of the meeting. Peak of 27.*

2. Approval of minutes from last meeting.

a. Matters arising from the last minutes

i. Election results:

President: Diana Martinez

Chair: Connor Armstrong

Secretary: Brad Din

Clubs and Societies Officer: Christos Vlahos

International Students Officer: Muhammad Zulkifly

3. Officer Reports:

a. **President [DM]**

*University Matters*

- The WSE Review held in the past month, there was feedback about how to involved more International students, the facilities Colleges have so students can get a proper College experience, get Postgrads more involve on WSE was suggested. The result of this review is Wider Student Experience has new strands; Arts and Culture, Enterprise and Employment, Intellectual Enquiry, Sport and Wellbeing, Community Engagement, and Active Citizenship. For more information visit this page <https://www.dur.ac.uk/experiencedurham/>. There has not been more discussion on getting a discount on accommodation fees for the last term, the only change is that students are not getting charged by the catered system if they had it previously.

- College and International Induction T&F Group had been meeting, where we discussed students physically arriving in September/October with social distancing, International students will need a period of quarantine. We are working on the next critical points arrivals and welcome, student training (consent matters, safety, police, fire), community building (social bubbles), College Ops and H&S, digital confidence, FReps training, visa and banking, student ID, international transport to Durham and, IF the capacity change to "large" events more social events and matriculation.

- The Induction T&F Group submitted this week a paper with suggestions to UEC about the Induction period, we are working on getting ready a timetable to give more clarity on times and activities incoming students can expect, the proposed time to have International students in College is the 14th of September, with a 2-week period for self-isolation, support for those arriving at Manchester and Newcastle airports. University will encourage international students to stay in Colleges.

- On the College Allocation T&F Group, we are working on the operational constraints of the bubbles and how to be implemented in Colleges, the distribution of students among all Colleges. Last week was submitted a paper to UEC with suggestions on College Operating model under Covid-19 conditions, having 5 different levels in accordance with government guidelines.

#### *College Matters*

- We are working with College to implement the bubbles while considering not only student living in College but also our livers-out, since University is looking into treat each College as a bubble, leaving these students out of them.

- As part of the Induction, Colleges will start working on their handbook to contain COVID guidelines and consistency on the messages across all colleges.

- Dryburn Court has been experiencing issues on the internet, we are working with College to make aware University of the issues so they can be solved in a long term period and not just temporarily.

#### *Exec Matters*

- The College has assured that the agreement for the transition fund is for 4 years, with the clause that the fourth year would be just available in case the HUB wasn't delivered. The fourth-year will be the academic year of 2020-2021.

- The composition fee for the next academic year will be the same and dependent on the number of students each College get. JCR levies prices for next academic year from some Colleges are £180 Aidan's (with free freshers week), £240 Hatfield (possible free freshers week), £130 Trevelyan (freshers week TBC), £135 John Snow (freshers week TBC), £150 South (freshers week TBC), £130 Josephine Butler (no comments on freshers week), £135 John's (with the possibility to get reduce later) all these are for 3 years. £35 Chad's (plus a touch more for sports and freshers TBC) per year. MCR levies are £35 Josephine Butler, £30 John Snow, both per year.

- We are working on plans for social distancing events, so far, social bubbles are looking to consider up to 30 students, merging between 2 or 3 normal bubbles, these bubbles are made up of flats. Bar staff would have to follow commercial guidelines in order to allow livers-out to work in the College bar.

- We are also considering to implement peer-circles during the self-isolation period, to give support to our upcoming students while they remain in their rooms. This system will consist of returning students who would like to volunteer during this period.

*There will be some formals planned with university, still in the process of being finalised.*

*Q: Possible to not call everything bubbles; i.e different names for groups living together and social groups? Confusion for internationals.*

*A: DM to speak to university and see if there is alternatives.*

*Q: University estimated finish time for the Hub? If not finished for the 21/22 year, will transition fund be extended?*

*A: Hope to be in use by Aug/Sept 2020, now that workers are back.*

**b. Vice-president [-]**

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**c. Treasurer [-]**

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*Addition from DM: contact charity commission, delay due to sending papers to accountant. No/very little money spent. DM and CA as trustees are currently the signatories.*

**d. Welfare [-]**

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**e. Clubs & Societies [CV]**

- Team Durham has finalised the college leagues: Due to several cancelled games in the Ultimate Frisbee and Volleyball league they can't declare champions or apply promotions/relegations. So even though our teams were leading Division 1 and Premiership respectively they can't officially be announced as champions or get promoted. On the other side our Women's Badminton team won Division 2 undefeated and Men's Basketball A and Pool A finished both on top of the Premiership.

- About next year, most things are still unclear about sports due to the pandemic but it's highly unlikely there will be college sports in Michaelmas term. Depending on the situation we might still be able to get training slots for sports that are safe to begin again.

**f. Communications [-]**

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**g. DSU Representative [-]**

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**h. International Officer [MZ]**

- The poster for returning student is ongoing. At the same time, the number of international returning student either for quarantine or not is still unknown.

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

- The issue with PBSA's rent agreement has worked considerably well with the exception of one private accommodation who has unfortunately chosen to not take any steps to specifically help students during COVID.

- I am working on re-drafting a Ustinov version of postgraduate accommodation guide for livers out and the same will be available on the website very soon.

*Q: Can the guide contain about recycling? SK to contact Fiona if more information needed, but yes.*

**j. Social [JI]**

Nothing to report.

*See AOB for VUD details.*

**k. Bar [-]**

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#### 4. Agenda Items:

##### a. **Motion to amend the Standing Orders to adjust the GCR levies to include three tiers to accommodate the effects of COVID-19. [BD]**

The GCR notes that:

- i. Many people are unable to travel to Durham in person, in-line with the University's decisions and plans to move to online teaching, particularly for Michaelmas term.
- ii. Many people feel it is unfair to charge a full £40 levy when a significant portion of this goes towards access to facilities, discounts for formals etc, alongside being a voting member of the GCR on the GMs and AGM.
- iii. Some students will choose to be in Durham for the first term regardless of teaching methods; depending on government regulations, the GCR may be able to put on some smaller, socially distanced events.

The GCR believes that:

- i. The best option to remain flexible (in the face of the 17th July deadline for levy adjustments) for future operations is to implement a voluntary three-tier system of levy prices. All tiers include full GCR membership with different benefits, although we have yet to finalise how we name these and advertise to incoming students. We intend that all tiers will be available from induction week in accordance with government/university regulations.

##### Tier 1: Digital Only Membership - £1

- This membership allows members to enjoy shared subscriptions, alongside being able to vote in GMs. This membership allows access to any and all online facilities the GCR is able to put on.
- This membership also gains a discount if members choose to upgrade to the full membership in later terms.

##### Tier 2: Digital + Local Socially Distanced Event Membership - £5

- This allows all of the above benefits to members, but it is aimed at members who are able to take advantage of any physical (socially distanced) events that the GCR can run by getting discounts to these.
- Minor facilities such as the DVD library and media cabinet (games consoles) will be included here if they can be managed safely.
- This membership also gains a significant discount if members choose to upgrade to the full membership in later terms.

##### Tier 3: In-person Event Membership

- Prices vary depending on previous memberships:
  1. £35 for new members (£35 membership total)
  2. £30 upgrade for those already holding Tier 1 (£31 total)
  3. £20 upgrade for those already holding Tier 2 (£25 total)

- This tier will look like the standard GCR membership we have already, with significant discounts on the gym, formals and summer ball as well as access to the Observatory. These will likely be subject to social distancing regulations for some of the year, the GCR will be operating in accordance with University and Government guidelines.

- ii. Members will be free to choose any tier they wish.
- iii. This framework places an emphasis on encouraging people to join the GCR and be able to vote at GMs, reaching quorum and run for executive positions, despite taking a financial hit. It is crucial to ensure we have members above all.
- iv. This deficit is offset by the money not spend from Summer 2020 events, and the fact that fewer physical events will be run in Michaelmas terms.

The GCR resolves to:

- i. Insert an additional part to section 6.3 Standing Orders, reading:

"Due to exceptional circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 outbreak, for the academic year 2020-2021, the GCR Levy shall be:

£1 for an online-only membership for those not wishing to attend social distancing events in Durham.

£5 for an online and social distancing membership for those wishing to attend socially distanced events with discounts.

£35 for a full GCR membership. This will be reduced to £30 if upgrading from a £1 membership and £20 if upgrading from a £5 membership.

Online-only members are treated as GCR members for all purposes except for discounted event entry and access to physical facilities run by the GCR"

**Proposer: Brad Din**

**Seconder: Diana Martinez**

*Q: Will you still be able to buy tiers one and two once tier three is available? If yes, aren't you punishing people who buy tier 3 right away if you have those discounts for people who got tier 1/2 first?*

*A: This system is just going to be used in the university system – closed at end of Oct – apart from that we will be able to check regulations and if the situation is better than just tier 3. Once the system is closed then we can't sell memberships online; only through the office.*

*Q: Could memberships then be sold online through Fixr?*

*A: If Gov guidelines say we can hold normal events, we will re-evaluate.*

*Q: A lot of our big expensive events are at the end of the year e.g. Ball, BBQ. If we can hold things earlier in the year we might want to hold them. Not all people with earlier tier 1/2 memberships may not upgrade – this may leave us with a black hole. Will this be a problem next year?*

*A: In terms of the budget we are still working on it. We will see how many students we get and how much money we raise, we will look into seeing if we can sell items or have sponsorship. We know a lot of colleges already charge for college days, which is something we don't want to do, but we will work on how we can hold events closer to the time. We would have like*

*to have a full budget with this right now but this was too short a timescale to allow this. One thing to add is that we still don't know what student numbers are so we can have a look at that when we know more from the university in a few months time.*

*Q: Well done for coming up with such an ambitious proposal. I can understand what tier 1 does but what does tier 2 do that has added value? Are you going to restrict access to some social distanced events to people who have only bought tier 2 membership?*

*A: As we have now with current formal prices there is a discounted price. There would be a full price for tier 1 to attend events. There is a small margin because you are not getting as much as you would normally get – these events are smaller – but you will still get discounts to whatever events we can put on. You get extra benefits from local shared options.*

*Q: If Tier 2 involves small discounts what added value do you get on tier 3? Is that added value worth having a third option which may be confusing?*

*A: This tier 3 replicates what we have at the moment – the discount to the ball, the gym, normal formals which aren't social distance restricted. The value is provisional on if these events can take place but I don't think it's any less value than paying £40 for typical years.*

*Q: This is requiring people to buy into that risk at the start of the year but summer ball prices could be set to offset losses when you have more information but if you have this on the list right now you will have some people buying it and they would get zero extra value. You could still get students who buy it up front and may be very angry that they will not get that extra value.*

*A: The October deadline for the university system is not the final deadline for the upgrade – we can sell this in the office or through fixer – you can upgrade to tier 3 at any point over the point of the academic year.*

*Q: Will you take into account not only government guidelines from the UK but also from other countries? There could be a situation where things start to look 'more normal' locally in Durham, but someone who is beginning a PhD half way through the year from another country is still unable to travel here, but may, for example, pay £1 to be involved in an online capacity. (If that were the case it may not be fair to get rid of the other options half way through the year).*

*A: Yes, that's the point of having these three tiers. All three tiers will be available. The tiers are for when we can't have the events in Durham and for students who can't come. We may not sell some tiers in Durham but if they can't travel they will be allowed to buy the membership but if they are here in Durham and restrictions are lifted then they won't be allowed to buy the memberships.*

*Q: For the tier 3 membership if it turns out we are not able to put on events will it be possible to offer Tier 3 members 'swag' instead? So that they receive something for what they paid if we are unable to provide the social experience.*

*A: 'Swag' is a phrase that should stay in 2018 but I love the idea. Tier 3 would not be available unless it is clear that these events will go ahead, pending government advice and university regulations. However,*

*regulations may change. It is a brilliant idea we would have if feasible.*

*Q: It's good you're acknowledging people access the world may have to join at different points. What financial reason would you give for having tier 3 available at the start of the year? Why would you not just buy a tier 2 and then upgrade the next day if events were possible.*

*A: We could put in a delay between upgrade and buying. The whole aim is to make sure we have members – we are prepared to take a hit for this. We don't know what the situation will be when the system goes live, we might never need Tier 1 and 2 for students in Durham but we may need that for students who can't travel. We want this for flexibility because maybe everything will be normal in September but if there is a 2nd wave we may go back into a lockdown. We think these levels will cover all the options we can think of.*

*Q: Would you then force people in Durham to buy tier 3, you'd be charging people for where they are in the world?*

*A: No one would be very forced to buy a membership – they just wouldn't get a discount to gym memberships and the ball they can still buy memberships and tickets at just a higher price. Tier 3 won't be available until it safe to do so. People can still pay full prices for events and the gym. This gives options for people to cover most situations and allow people to choose the best option for their needs while still allowing us to keep our members up.*

*Q: This could make it more complicated for the GCR to manage/ How would you police not to allow people who are in Durham that they don't buy tier 1/2 and then upgrade? I feel that you're making your life unnecessarily complicated by offering the upgrading discount. Everything would be so much easier if you scrapped the discount.*

*A: There is no reason for new students to pay money unless there is a reason – the discount is a very strong incentive. If we didn't have tier 2 – we are asking people to pay £35 upfront for something they don't know about – there is no reason for them to do that when there is no guarantee there is a time for these events that make it worth paying.*

*Q: Why would you not just buy a tier 2 and then upgrade the next day if events were possible.*

*A: What we can do is not have the upgrade throughout the year but just when the whole benefits become available for a short period of time – so people won't be able to buy £1 and then upgrade two days later.*

*Q: I really like how you've worded it just specific to this year and you're not setting an odd precedent for future years. Not that I don't believe the powers of CIS but have you checked that the uni system will be able to handle a 3 tier system.*

*A: Diana has checked with Event Durham and they have the ability to have different categories and we can add some text (we will need to check where this will be) but it will be on the same page as where you choose the membership.*

*Q: I really like the tier 1 online membership to allow people to join in an online capacity. Tier 3 seems to be focused on a 'normal year' – but the exec*

*already get to decide on what the discounts are on events that take place. I appreciate why it's there but have you considered a 2 tier membership only so £10/15 where the exec can decide discounts – have you considered this and what problems where there?*

*A: Yes we thought about this and looked at what other colleges are doing – all other college haven't changed – we don't think this is feasible for us – we are not sure if we are going to have social distanced events – the uni is hopeful but we are dubious. We discussed 2 tiers first but we could not see how to separate social distanced events from normal ones. We don't know what social distanced events we are able to have. If we have formals we will only be able to have very low numbers e.g. 100 students. We wanted to have a little bit of difference between formals where lots of people can attend and once with capped capacity.*

*Q: I'm slightly concerned about new students being confused as they are overwhelmed with new info when they arrive. You can still control discounts for events if you have a two tier system but I appreciate your answer.*

*A: In terms of the budget – getting rid of the tier 3 could be quite dangerous – to the other stuff eg. Playstation, xbox, gym, observatory – there's more to the GCR than just getting access to the formals.*

*Comment: Non-members can get gym memberships but you can still control levels of discounts.*

*Q: The budget assumed almost normal year with estimated levy income of £7k and bottom of £15k if we had no GCR levies. With min £3k spend even if we do no events, from insurance etc. We have £65k in savings a loss of £10k seems like a reasonable risk to take in a pandemic. Using these savings seems like a reasonable use of those funds. £35 is a very expensive membership option – high risk for the students - that doesn't seem like a necessary risk to take given that a loss of that scale could be adsorbs.*

*A: We don't think we will have 2 times the induction costs as the first one is likely to be online. We can have one proper induction week in jan or feb when things are clearer. When we start having proper events we can start to push buying the upgrades or full memberships.*

*Q: A two tier system as described in a previous questions could be absorbed financially.*

*A: I don't think two tiers are enough – we think adjusting discounts accordingly is a more dangerous situation than the one described here. £25 is a bargain if come Christmas everything is back to normal. Once we are allowed to hold parties we are not going to be able to hold our free events such as parties.*

*Q: The budget suggests that we could absorb it especially with only one in person induction week. People may be angry if they pay up front and then don't get as much as you hope.*

*A: We will be very clear up front about what people are actually going to get and the risk. We need more members.*

*Comment: This year most people bought GCR memberships because they wanted gym memberships. Big discounts will pull people in as no one cares*

*about small discounts but they will care about larger more obviously visible ones.*

*Amendment Proposed: Proposal to remove the 3rd Tier and the full GCR membership given to the 2nd tier*

*Proposed by AB*

*Seconded by AH*

*This was not accepted by Brad and Diana because they want to avoid taking the financial hit.*

*If you have a small levy the discount will be tiny – this three tier system gives greater flexibility.*

*AB says that it will be unclear to new students what they are getting when they buy – discounts can be decided when events can be held.*

*Q: Will the tier 3 only be offered if the guidelines change.*

*A: Tier 3 has to be on the system but it will be made very clear that they should not buy that unless things change. We need the £35 option there in case things change again.*

*Q: If you have it on at the start on the system – it will confuse people – we sold less memberships than usual this year – you don't want to over subsidise the ball. I think it would be better to be upfront with people and charge smaller discounts.*

*A: Surely this is why there needs to be this discount. The purpose of tier 3 is for the normal operation when tier 2 is when there's not. It makes more sense to have this as an option.*

*Comment: People will see on the website that you got more discounts last year.*

*Comment: The issue seems to be that the uni has set a deadline of Friday after which point we cannot change the levy until next year. Whether or not that is an option offered to people is an option now – but that decision needs to be made now.*

*Comment: I agree 100% that theoretically having tier 3 is really helpful for flexibility, but think it shouldn't be in the online system from the beginning and ONLY available as soon as things can happen again, which will most definitely not be in first term.... (just a summary of my thoughts, nothing new)*

*Comment: I worry that you will get no one buying a tier 3 membership anyway/or in tiny numbers, so the concern you have about the finances (which I don't believe are quite there to the extent you're saying, going by Vera's budget and Alex Blair's points) will still be there and all you're adding is unnecessary confusion.*

*Q: I understand the uni had put you in a difficult decision and they lack of time for discussion is down to the uni's deadline. Have you considered using a different mechanism to collect levies to take away this time pressures so that we can use our own system?*

*A. Yes – the problem would be we don't have the resources on the website to do this at the moment. If we want to use Fixr people will be charged*

*more for the privilege of paying. If we use a different platform we will either have to charge students this or we would have to take the hit.*

*Comment: There may be other options but you may not have the time to do that now.*

*Comment: Better to have the option and not need it than not have the option and doom the GCR to financial ruin and having very limited scope for GCR action, thus instantly dooming the year to be worse than it needs to be.*

*AB has an new amendment to his original amendment to:*

*Proposed Amendment: To remove the 3rd tier option and to raise the cost of the 2nd tier to be £10.*

*Proposed AB*

*Seconded AH*

*Counter Amendments Proposed by BD and 2nd by DM,*

*To insert the following text to 6.3 in the Standing Orders reading:*

*"Due to exceptional circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 outbreak, for the academic year 2020-2021, the GCR Levy shall be:*

*£1 for an online-only membership for those not wishing to attend social distancing events in Durham.*

*£5 for an online and social distancing membership for those wishing to attend socially distanced events with discounts.*

*£35 for a full GCR membership. This will be reduced to £30 if upgrading from a £1 membership and £20 if upgrading from a £5 membership. **This tier can only be sold if University and government guidelines allow the GCR to run a full set of events and open the gym.***

*Online-only members are treated as GCR members for all purposes except for discounted event entry and access to physical facilities run by the GCR"*

*Q: Legal issues may arise if we are seen to be limiting some events to members only. Need to be careful about this.*

*A: Nothing in this amendment is superseding any previous precedence in the constitution or the other standing orders.*

*Q: If we are unable open the gym but were able to run a full set of events, then we would then be locked into tier 2 at most.*

*A: That is a good point; the amendment should be changed to remove mention of the gym.*

*New amendment to be voted on will be:*

*Insert an additional part to section 6.3 Standing Orders, reading: "Due to exceptional circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 outbreak, for the academic year 2020-2021, the GCR Levy shall be:*

*£1 for an online-only membership for those not wishing to attend social distancing events in Durham.*

*£5 for an online and social distancing membership for those wishing to attend socially distanced events with discounts.*

*£35 for a full GCR membership. This will be reduced to £30 if upgrading from a £1 membership and £20 if upgrading from a £5 membership. **This***

***tier can only be sold if University and government guidelines allow the GCR to run a full set of events.***

*Online-only members are treated as GCR members for all purposes except for discounted event entry and access to physical facilities run by the GCR."*

*Vote: passes with 22 for, 1 against, 3 abstentions*

## 2. Hustings

### a. **Welfare Officer**

**Candidate: Jake Brooker**

**Manifesto:** Hi, I'm Jake, a second-year PhD student in psychology, and I'd like to run for the position of Welfare Officer. We're about to enter a new manifestation of university and college life that has not been experienced in our lifetimes, and it will be vital to maintain the high standards of welfare support that Bryony and the committee have provided before and during the pandemic.

I'm passionate about continuing to improve the discourse surrounding mental and sexual health, as well as accessibility. I'd like to run a variety of campaigns throughout the year promoting awareness and education on topics such as consent for current and new students. Further, I believe in increasing representation and, thus, one of the first actions I would like to motion for is the introduction of a BAME Representative to join the Ustinov GCR Welfare Committee.

I have worked with vulnerable populations through volunteer work with various organisations including age charities and day centres for adults with learning disabilities. I am also experienced in volunteering with the GCR during last years induction, such as assisting with the Green Move-In Sale and welcome fairs. Through my time at Durham I've been an active part of the college, regularly throwing frisbees on Whinny Hill and shouting in the bar with my friend Craig at many Ustinov Lives. I'd like to give back to the college that has provided, and will continue to provide, great memories.

**Hust:** *Hi, for those who don't know me, 2<sup>nd</sup> year psychology, seen around pool table and shouting with harmonica. Want to get involved in college and represent/provide the wellbeing that students both current and from abroad need. We are entering a new type of college life, and it is vital to maintain support, building on the work of previous officers. It remains to be seen how social distancing affects us; a constant virtual presence is critical, as with health and safety from government advice and in-person support. I am passionate about mental and sexual health campaigns, and would like to have events to advertise these, which are very important. This will be beneficial for new and current students. It is important to bring the notion of representation; BAME officer proposal would like to be made for this. Not much experience with committees but would like to throw myself into this and help out fellow students where I can.*

### **Questions:**

*Q: Welfare is trustee position. Do you have any criminal convictions or have been declared bankrupt.*

*A: No.*

*Q: Students comments query can be very mentally stressful. Looking after your own mental wellbeing while being able to offer support to wider student population and*

*other exec members is difficult. How do you think you could do this?*

*A: Practice general mindfulness techniques everyday. If things get particularly stressful, I am aware of the resources available such as counselling. Would be part of training to be more aware of these anyway for signposting.*

*Q: About this period of lockdown – if a student needs to be self-quarantined, e.g international students who need to remain isolated. What can the GCR give them to remain healthy during this time?*

*A: Creating a strong virtual presence in all senses needs to be a priority. Arrange for social events (liaise with Clubs+Socs, Social Sec) such as cooking classes, which are important for physical and mental health. Beyond the pandemic, this would be useful as well, to provide information and guidance about how to maintain their nutritional health, such as shops and locations in Durham.*

*- Call for the current unfilled positions. No response/additional husts.*

### **3. Any other Business**

*VUD plug. YouTube, live music, award ceremony, social media interaction, quizzes, brainteasers etc. See last meeting! Absolutely everybody is welcome.*

Brad Din

GCR Secretary

12/07/2020