



Ustinov College GCR Exec Meeting

Minutes

6:00 pm, 22/02/21

Action Points From Minutes – red is new from today's meeting.

CA to extend last few email accounts

CA to find out about the updates to green move-in sale, and update details about facilities at SP for handbook

CA to organise an online office hours rota as the new committee comes in

CA to check the SOs to see who needs to approve the bank transfer

DM to check with university and college about the consequences of purchasing drug testing kits

VV to follow up on the cheese price discrepancy

VV to start process of changing bank (remain non-committed to allow time to pass GM/trustees if needed)

JB to recontact women's refuge regarding donations

1. Apologies: *MZ*

Present: *BD, DM, CA, JB, CV, VV, FD, SG, LC*

2. Approval of minutes from last meeting.

- a. Approval of minutes from 15/02/2021 – *passed on a general aye*

3. Matters arising from previous minutes.

- a. CA to extend last few email accounts *ongoing*
- b. CA to find out about the updates to green move-in sale, and update details about facilities at SP for handbook *ongoing*
- c. CA to organise an online office hours rota as the new committee comes in *ongoing*
- d. VV to investigate the capabilities of the local Durham banks *see agenda item*
- e. VV to look into alternative membership levy systems *see agenda item*
- f. DM to check with university and college about the consequences of purchasing drug testing kits *ongoing – see report for progress*
- g. JB to recontact women's refuge regarding donations *ongoing*

4. Agenda Items:

a. [VV] Cheese box cost

- We had an expected cost for the cheese boxes at £80 (even rounded up, just in case), invoice totalled at £100.

Would be interesting to know why they charged a different price, and why it was more expensive than the quote.

Vote to pass up to £100 to cover the cheese, with VV to follow up on why the price differs: passes with 8 for, 1 abstention.

[AP] VV to follow up on the cheese price discrepancy

Regarding the large bottles; if we were to do this again, we might need to reevaluate the tickets. This is a question for the next formal.

b. [VV] Moving Bank Providers

- After the suggestion to research potential banks to move funds- I undertook some research and overall there are two banks that I believe are very good. Both of them have an office in Durham, hence the issue about going to Newcastle is resolved. I will try to negotiate with them once actually speaking about a simpler procedure regarding the future change of ownership of the Account to get that out of the way too.

- Here are the two banks and their characteristics

	Barclays	NatWest
PROS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Free banking up until 100k turnover• app,• 3 signatories,• 6 debit cards	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Free banking up until 100k turnover• free accounting software,• app,• 4 signatories
CONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Debit cards aren't really needed• No software	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The accounting software (although with limited functionality) could actually spoil future Treasurers and make future change of bank difficult

- For further details:

- <https://www.barclays.co.uk/business-banking/accounts/community-account/>

- <https://www.business.natwest.com/business/bank-accounts/community-bank-account.html>

[AP] CA to check the SOs to see who needs to approve the bank transfer (Exec/Exec+Trustees/GM?)

Debit cards are useless since we would not do that, since any purchase needs to go through VV. Would need to change the process. Is this necessarily a bad thing?

Natwest does have maybe 1-2 cards.

Regarding software; is it that helpful? If not, then many things point to Barclays.

The software is suitable for very simple incomes, and overviews, but not essential – not as good as some other softwares either.

Would Barclays or Natwest allow us to take card payments? A card machine may be provided – VV will check this.

Vote to move to one of these or stick with our current provider: passes with all in favour.

Nobody is against these two options.

Vote to move to Barclays: 8 in favour, 1 abstention.

[AP] VV to start process of changing bank (remain non-committed to allow time to pass GM/trustees if needed) and look into card payments

c. [VV] Using World-pay to take payment

Added to the back-end of websites. VV has used before; simple to use. Was £15 per month (maybe see if it can be cheaper due to charity) + transaction cost. An option to move away from the charge that the uni uses.

Can this be added to the websites? Websites have a backend, and the developers at world-pay do this. May not be possible with free version of word-press; additional subscription of £225 per year. We might need to have extra plug ins for this (£18.75 per month).

Need to know how much the university charge is at a broken down level; and their obligations for the payment (as long as they give us a certain level of service). Good reference anyway.

Why not just bank transfer payments? Some legal issues?

Need to find out what other common rooms are doing; only Cuths uses the website. They used an external design website, with a cost of £5000 but they have no idea how it works. Other independent common rooms are the same as us.

Continue to investigate options; can it be incorporated into the current websites? Look into legal rules re bank transfers.

5. Officer Reports:

a. Bar [-]

- We met on Friday with University to discuss further the furloughing of our bar staff. University mentioned that they are not allowed to furlough since rules have changed and if they furlough bar staff, they will have to furlough all casual staff from University (around 2000 people) as the University cannot just apply for one type of furlough. It was also mentioned the opportunities for bar staff to use the repurpose positions available in University, however, I mentioned that our bar staff is PGs who have lab workload during the day and the repurpose positions were during the day, making it difficult for them to apply. Last point given from the University is that the payment of bar staff comes from bar income and that is something the University doesn't have. All Colleges will compile a list of their bar staff and their current situation, including if they are in Durham, live in College and if they have participated in any repurpose positions. By the time of our meeting, I have sent this list.

b. Clubs & Societies [CV]

- I'm still trying to contact PlayerLayer but the person I'm talking with is on leave till Tuesday so I hope I will have more news about that next week.

c. Communications [LC]

- Newsletter 14 published on Wednesday - advertisements for Jazz, DSU elections and Lunar New Year competition winners

- Facebook events page made for the Jazz Night - currently 522 people reached with 17 responses

- Social posts for the Jazz, Wine and Cheese to boost ticket sales
- Valentine's baking comp winners to feature in next week's newsletter

d. DSU [-] (DM)

- Elections start on Monday 22nd February. I have not received any promotional information about the candidates, but I have shared the DSU page that contains all the information.

e. Facilities [-] (DM)

- Connor and I have finished the handover. I have created a guide to set up karaoke and I will finish the guide for the movie. I have added the Easter Virtual Egg Scavenger to the page and will be available on the 4th of April.

f. Finance [VV]

- Starting account balance: £ 46,960.23
- Income from memberships: £ 77.67
- Income from Coca Cola machine: £ 55.37
- Income from Coca Cola machine: £ 197.88
- Income from Composition fees: £ 4,026.00
- Current Account Balance: £ 51,317.15
- During the week vote took place to approve Social budgets at £140 for drinks and £80 for the Jazz Night (Wine and Cheese) event. The event's ticket sale was closed with 38 tickets sold, among which 12 were standard and 26 for Tier 2 members. Total amount generated to cover the losses was £36.

g. International Officer [MZ]

- Nothing to report.
- Is college doing anything for International Women's Day? College is making some videos, JB is helping with these. We can do our own thing as well.*

h. Livers Out Rep [FD]

- Over the past week, I have been promoting events on the LO group on Facebook and delivered the wine and cheese boxes to some LOs for the Jazz night

i. Social [SG]

- Cheese and wine night done
- Thank you everyone who helped, has been a real team effort and I think the customers are happy. We're also getting incredibly streamlined with deliveries so add that to your resumes.
- In the process of selecting winners for the valentines baking competition
- Looking to hold a social committee meeting soon to discuss easter ideas
- Winners of lunar new year decoration competition sorted.
- Quiz hosts still needed.

j. Steering [CA]

- Nothing to report.
- When is AGM? Late May, early June probably. Would be good to have some time before AGM e.g. one month to have positions run etc.*

k. Welfare [JB]

- Second welfare drive went okay, less popular but perhaps to be expected. Will

continue for now. Might send out feedback form this week

I. University/College Matters [DM]

University matters

- On Wednesday I attend the SS&WSC (Student Support and Wellbeing Sub-Committee), we start the discussion with PG mental health issues, key points are applications experience, funding options, beginning the degree, relationship with academic staff and supervisor, differences for PGTs and PGRs, pressure of teaching, job prospects and effect of the pandemic. I also added the issues of PGs coming with families and the difficulty of getting information.

- Then, we continued with a presentation from the Counselling service where they pointed out that fewer PGR students access the service and most PGTs are international furthermore, when they reach out is often when they are already in a crisis. Some issues that are raised with them are the sense of isolation, issues on supervisory relationship, issues around declaring mental health as a disability. They have offered PGR therapy group, additional academic wellbeing webinars, support on Open Days and Induction. The Catalyst Fund Project focussed on the relationship between supervisor and supervisees.

- Other topics we discussed are that international students have their cultural barrier in order to search for help, Team Durham has a strong relationship with their PGs under their umbrella. The difficulty for accessing funding for students with disabilities. Peer support network and distance learning students.

- On the Student Support Review Project, we started with an update on the phase 1 with engagement sessions. As of 3 February, 198 had attended, giving an approximate attendance rate of 73%. Total of 13 workshops for the following groups: Faculties - Managers and support officers

- Academic Departments - Department Managers, L&T Managers, Academics, Deputy Executive Deans, Combined Programme Leaders, PGR Coordinators.

- Colleges - Heads of House, Vice Principals, Assistant Principals and Support Staff

- Central PSS - Student Support and Wellbeing Directorate Managers and wider staff, Occupational Health and Scholarships, Student Funding and Student Immigration Office.

- The workshops were completed using the online collaboration tool Miro with over 1500 individual pieces of feedback. Feedback came from 16 academic departments and 5 Colleges.

- The emerging themes from the workshops are: staff, wide range of support available, training and development, college system, clear roles, responsibilities and processes are followed by all, information sharing, culture, student requirements, silos, time consuming administration, governance and vision, peer and student led support, best practice, communication is key, hours of service availability, offsite activities, accessibility of services, pro-active support, relationship between college, department and central PSS, communities of practice, staff wellbeing.

- Because the International Office was struggling to get responses on the International Students Survey, I shared the information with our students over our social media and also to MCR Presidents.

- On the JCR PresComm we discussed the lack of study spaces for livers out due to the availability of study spaces across Colleges that were closed to them. We also got an update from SSDP about the drug testing kits for students. Saskia

from St. Cuthbert's noted that she and Sam from Butler had seen the most promising discussions with their college and JCR and added that they had wrote a report and sent it to Mandy Marlowe about the University's current drug policy and the benefits of having drug testing kits which Mandy has previously showed interest in but is yet to respond. It was suggested a more in-depth conversation with SSDP, Colleges and the DSU about how the mechanics of delivering and providing drug testing kits would work across the University and the different organisations and the possibilities of having anonymised email requests for having drop-ins alongside giving out these kits.

- On the MCR PresComm we had an update on the Accommodation Fee Review, and it was noted that there was not one single consensus between students. The group was driving towards showing accommodation provides value for money and for students to understand and agree what value for money means, even though this was a longer-term strategy. Huw (MCR Butler President) would be leading a student review with focus groups run by student leaders to highlight issues and thoughts in colleges and other groups. He added that he would also create a survey to gather thoughts in a more quantitative way.

- On the Townhall session of today, University mentions that the congregation will happen in September, they are planning to extend the next term for one week (June), LFT will continue, and University doesn't have a response on whether to go ahead or not with the BPR2.

College matters

- On Tuesday College sent an email about accommodation charges for the Epiphany term, it outlines the process for applying for a fee waiver.

Exec matters

- On the MCR PresComm, Jack from St. Cuthbert's, notified us that the provisional date for the Murder Mystery Formal would be 17th March and added that we are invited and that he will send information for the event closer to the time.

- The system from University to pay levies is working again and I have asked University to leave it open at least for this term.

- I am working with Alyson (GUSP) to deliver some activities to our kids at Keenan house. I am now supporting the "Family Fun Project this Easter: Minibeasts Mosaic Project" and have 3 families from Keenan house signed up.

- I have been contacted by one member of Palatine who is writing an article about the JCR levies, I have shared with her the link where all the details to our levies are and mention that we don't have a JCR, we are a GCR.

Do we know anything more about accommodation charges for term, regarding keys in reception etc? No – they need to send waiver form but other measures like porters etc. I.e Glenn was incorrect at the GM.

6. AOB

a.

Brad Din

GCR Secretary

22/02/2021