

Ustinov College GCR Annual General Meeting Minutes



5:00 p.m., 31/05/2020, held over Zoom

1. Apologies: ML

Present: AH, RS, DM, JI, VB, RR, BR, SK, SH, AL, CA

2. Issues arising from the last minutes

a. Approval of Minutes from the last meeting

Minutes from the Annual General Meeting held on 08/06/19 – *passed [24 for, 1 against]*

Minutes from the General Meeting held on 22/03/20 – *passed [24 for, 1 against]*

3. Questions with Sarah Prescott

- a. Q:** A few weeks ago there was a discussion about a discount for accommodation to cover the fact that cleaning of rooms and kitchens is no longer covered due to the exceptional circumstances. Do we have any update on this?

A: As far as I'm aware, the central FAQs were updated, and the University does not intend to refund any discount in relation to the cleaning changing due to the pandemic. This is a central decision that the University has taken and as far as I'm aware that is as much information as there is on the FAQs. You can email the accommodation office if you want to, but they directed me back to the FAQs.

- b. Q:** Hi I'm Fiona the Eco Rep, a few months ago I was trying to contact the council to get a pedestrian crossing at the end of Westhouse Avenue because we have to cross that road all the time and it's very busy and dangerous and the local residents often complain about students being in the middle of the road. I hadn't really had any response back from the council and I followed up on it a few times but wondered if you had any recommendations or if you could help me follow it up because I think it is a pretty important issue.

A: By all means contact them again and copy me in, I would suggest to contact them again and ask for an update. I would imagine priorities will be shifting quite a lot currently but certainly if you want to email them again and add my name to it I am more than happy to endorse that. We don't have a lot of control over it unfortunately.

- c. Q:** The café and the central communal areas in college were shut, do you have any idea as to when these will be open again? I assume the answer will be we're just waiting to see what the government says

A: I know that the University has a strategic plan in place to open up aspects of the campus taking government advice. They have emailed PGRs to say that lab spaces

will be the first to open when possible and they have also been opening up small areas in departments to see if they can do it with social distancing and keeping people to a minimum for staff to go in and take out essential equipment. As far as I am aware they have only done a couple of trials of this and health and safety were heavily involved. The next stage will be looking at labs and anything PGR related to try and maximise the benefits for PGR students and beyond that I would imagine leisure and social spaces will be after this. We are waiting to be updated by the University. The gym I would imagine will come last purely because in society leisure will be last. Social spaces and cafes will be open as soon as we can get social distancing in place and across the whole University following government guidelines but until then they are all closed across the site. They will be open as soon as we can do it safely.

- d. **Q:** A few days ago we received an email from University telling us we have to pay a certain amount to have our parcels shipped to our home countries if we are now away from Durham. Some countries have lockdowns on post offices, what is college's response to this?

A: In terms of having your belongings shipped, if the home country that the student is in is now allowing parcels then there is obviously an issue with the deadline of July 10th. Get in touch with student.belongings@durham.ac.uk and let them know that you are not able to post anything to the country that you are currently in and obviously there will be alternative arrangements made. There is some flexibility for students in this position and we are aware of that. The shipping company that was identified in the information is just an example and is not affiliated with the University; it was just representative of the rates being offered by such companies. Students can go about shipping and packaging however they wish and choose their own supplier.

Q: Would it be possible for someone else to collect the belongings?

A: Yes. The company that was advertised as an example break down the costs so you don't have to pay for all the packing, shipping and postage service so if you had someone on-site, you can give permission to the college to allow them to go in and pack your belongings you can save yourself part of the fee so you would only have to pay for the shipping. Equally I know that students have thought about paying for extra baggage for friends to bring things back for them. If you are in any doubt, email student.belongings@durham.ac.uk, but yes you can have someone else pack your belongings for you as long as we have full permissions in writing from you to do that.

- e. **Q:** Can you explain why the university is charging the 'lost item' fees for room keys, access card, key fobs etc. that students are not able to return as a direct consequence of the pandemic?

A: This is because we ask students that if they leave the country or leave for any period of time then they leave their keys with reception so they are held responsible if they leave the country and can't get the keys back. We discovered it might cost you more to ship the keys back as recorded delivery than it would be to pay the charge for the lost key, so this is why this was suggested.

- f. **Q:** As the Vice Chancellor mentioned on Tuesday, the University does not expect to be in a full reopening by the start of Michaelmas term. Can Sarah provide any

information on the expected size of the cohort at the start of next year, as Ustinov will be affected by international students in particular not being able to travel to the UK?

A: No is the simple answer. We are hoping for a good arrival in October and for Michaelmas term to run as we like, but obviously we have to factor into it that we will be disproportionately affected by the number of International students that we have at Ustinov as many may not be able to travel or wish to travel in October they may wish to wait. The University is looking at some PGT programmes to have a January start date so we will potentially have a bigger cohort arriving in January along with the usual PGR January cohort. With regards to numbers in October, I don't know the answer. Entry numbers at the moment are looking pretty standard and not lower than previous years but this doesn't necessarily translate into arrivals. If there is another rise in the infection rate in their home country or here, and if we go back into a stronger lockdown then this will impact the number of arrivals. We are factoring this into our planning, particularly if we need to have a second induction in January. We do a small induction in January anyway for PGR students but we may need to expand this.

- g. Q:** Are accommodation contracts going to be of the same length whether you start on October or January?

A: I would assume yes because it is a 50-week course either way but I can check with the accommodation office and confirm. I don't think they have made a final decision on this yet and will maybe wait until they have an idea of the number of students.

- h. Q:** Has there been any decision about winter graduation?

A: No I haven't heard anything about it yet, they might be planning one that I don't know about and haven't been updated on. At the minute there is so much going on and the situation is changing regularly it's still a very fluid situation. This information will be released when they have it but at the moment they are working on the next few months and getting into the start of the year.

- i. Q:** Would PGRs have an option to return in July?

A: If the University decides to open up parts of the campus such as labs then potentially yes, students can approach their colleges and ask if they can have a short-term accommodation contract if they cancelled their contract due to the pandemic. This would be assuming that the government has changed its guidance and allows you to come back and stay overnight. If you were also a returner and wanted to live in next year then you would apply for a returners contract to take you through to the following year. I must stress this is dependent on the University being able to open aspects of the campus because at the minute it would only be allowed on exceptional welfare grounds.

4. Reports from Officers

a. President [DM]

University matters:

This year the GCR has increased its presence on University-related issues. To mention some:

- BPR2: we supported our porters and housekeepers while the process was under consideration by University, putting emphasis on the impacts our students would have if this review was going forward. Due to the current circumstances, the review has been postponed.
- Bar Staff Review: with University moving towards more standardised pay scales, the decision has been passed to have bar staff paid the minimum wage living rate. I am working with other JCR Presidents to ensure that our bar prices don't get affected since the recommendation is to raise some items by 20p.

We have maintained good connections with other Colleges by continuing to be part of the JCR and MCR PresComm where we have been working shoulder to shoulder in order to protect our students' interests.

As part of my role as President, I have been working on the Induction group where at the beginning we focussed to improve the Induction week and events around all University. This has changed due to the current circumstances and now the group has created a new subgroup called "Induction Task & Finish Group" to counterbalance the effects students might get next Induction period. Another group on which I am member is the WSE Online - Enterprise and Employment where we are looking into delivering more online options on this topic.

College matters:

We have been working closely with College to ensure that the queries raised to us get an answer. One of these queries was the heating/cooling system during parties. Our first parties were very hot and after working with College and taking temperature readings during parties College now has the control to regulate temperature during these events.

Exec matters:

At the beginning of the year, we got asked by our members to have more transparency on the involvement of the President in University and College decisions. In order to help the President become more accessible to students, we created an Official Facebook Page. We have reached 3,840 people.

We took part for the first time in the National Road and Safety Week to highlight the importance of being visible while walking/riding a bike around Durham.

Our relationship with the local community has been improved over this year; our first "Afternoon tea" event was very well received. Aside from being active in the SPRA meetings and Sheraton Park Facebook Group, we have also increased our relationship with Neville Cross Association, St. Johns Church, Durham Market Place and Town Hall. Local residents are more open to discussions.

We have had a lot of participation from students volunteering in our events and activities. We have achieved a total of 7,301 hours, despite not being able to hold some events at the end of our year.

We are working closely with other Colleges to get an updated version of the Memorandum of Agreement that we have with the University since the one that we have is currently inaccurate.

Lastly, we are very sorry that due to the current circumstances we couldn't deliver all the events we had planned for you. We hope you have enjoyed your time at Ustinov College and gained a lot of good memories!

b. Treasurer [VB]

This year we remained on track with our budget quite well until Covid-19 changed everything. While we sold fewer GCR memberships than anticipated, the high number of non-members also meant that we easily broke even on formals and trips and even made a slight surplus on some of them. But then came the virus. We realised the gravity of the situation just as we had finished selling tickets for our Castle formal and swiftly refunded all these. Something to note for future execs: the usage of the online ticketing platform FIXR helped a lot with these refunds but also with all previous ticket sales! Since the lockdown we have not spent any major amounts of money, meaning that many of our expenses were cut, such as parties, family events (no Egg Day this year), the Summer Ball, photography (no events, no photos), and even our BT subscription as these payments have been put on hold due to the lack of sporting events. As will be covered in a separate agenda item, we are also expecting to spend far less on our Summer BBQ than budgeted since we cannot hope to have such an event taking place physically this summer.

We are expecting to come out of this year with an unexpectedly high surplus (for details see attached spreadsheet) but we will be in dire need of this financial cushion next year. We expect fewer students to be physically present in Durham and so it will be harder than ever to communicate the importance of the GCR to new students and to encourage them to become members. Furthermore, the university's apparent strategy to conduct most teaching online in the first term could lead to two waves of arrivals and us having to organise two Induction Weeks to make all new students feel welcome and at home. I certainly do not envy next year's committee for the challenges they are facing!

You can see more about our figures in the finance-based points on our Agenda and in the spreadsheets that have been sent around by email. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions!

Finally, I have some disheartening news about the Treasurer role which I just found out this year: Up to this year, college has always supported the GCR by giving a 100% accommodation scholarship to our president and a 50% one to our treasurer. However, as part of their measures to reduce spending in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, college have decided that they will no longer provide the accommodation scholarship for the treasurer (but will maintain the one for the president). This is unfortunate as the role of Treasurer is really important and the accommodation scholarship is a great incentive to ensure that it will not be neglected, but unfortunately there is nothing we can do under the current circumstances.

Q: With regards to the surplus money, could you give us any indication as to how this money would be spent? I.e. a big purchase for the GCR? Covering losses? Or bigger parties and events next year?

A: *I think mainly to cover any deficit we will have next year because as soon as we will be able to have events we want to give students the best Ustinov experience that we can. Especially because we expect the levies to go down and also the money we receive from the University will be reduced next year. We also don't know yet from*

when social distancing measures will change. It would be great if we could have a bigger summer BBQ next year but we have no idea at this point and is something the new exec will have to discuss next year.

Q: What are the contingency plans for carrying out the Treasurer duties during the next few months, whilst there is no formal Treasurer in place?

A: *I was planning to discuss this with our trustees because this is a problem and I'm not going to be here for much longer probably. I guess the president will have to do it because they are also signed on to the bank account but I'm sure the president would not want to do this as well as all the president work.*

c. Vice President [CA]

It seems a long time ago now that I was elected VP. A lot has happened since then and I'll do my best to summarise most of it. The Summer was a time where we had a small exec committee and so a lot of the focus was on filling in for absent positions and helping each other out. This year at one time or another I have acted as chair, secretary, comms officer and social sec as well as managing facilities issues.

The first big event I was involved in was the Summer BBQ, both as an ex-committee member and a new exec. This was a great event; I was mostly involved in the tech and logistics side and this all ran smoothly (thanks to committees old and new and our many volunteers). After the event, it became clear that our current storage arrangements are inadequate and so I've spent an amount of time improving them. We now have an additional cupboard in Neville House, allowing us to remove all non-tech from the tech cupboard and to divide the social stores based on how often we use things. An amount of BBQ-related items are now stored over at the Observatory since we only need them once a year. The next step is to fully inventory everything we have. This will serve two purposes: committee members will know what we own before purchasing things for events (do we need decorations for a particular theme? Napkins? Craft supplies?). It will also let us record the assets the GCR owns to keep a better track of what money is spent on. This is especially important for more valuable items like the bass speakers we purchased as well as items in the bar and gym that the GCR owns and is therefore responsible for maintaining. This inventory I plan to complete over the summer (hopefully as part of a VP handover), so long as the health restrictions allow it – as our storage is mostly in people's flats.

Throughout the year, I've also been involved in many of our events, including the GMIS and induction week. I've helped our tech officer run several Ustinov Lives and helped out at our late-night parties (basically anything that involves lugging boxes around). We've also had 2 stash orders (although we are unlikely to manage a third). The facilities committee have had some great successes this year. Fiona (the eco rep) has set up an allotment to restart the Ustinov gardening society. This has involved some collaboration from local residents, many of whom are incredibly knowledgeable on these things. The college have also agreed to let the grassy area West of Neville House to go unmown in the hopes of cultivating a wildflower meadow to increase biodiversity. Max (Sheraton Park Rep) has helped us keep the vending machine stocked with college favourites and together we planned and ran a successful pancake night (serving to over 100 people!).

We've also tried to improve the facilities we have as well as add signs to better inform everyone what we offer (such as the library, media cabinet and DVDs, which are sometimes overlooked). With a lot of help from Colin, the observatory has had some decoration in the form of art, team shirts and BBQ photos that were originally in Howlands'. This is still a work in progress (the lockdown has prevented me from doing more). We also still hope to have a projector and sound system eventually set up in the Fisher Room so people can watch DVDs or downloaded films.

Our final big success is that we are in the process of claiming a £8000 refund for fixed assets that we could not take with us when we had to leave Howlands. This will pay for a new Greenhouse and other facilities improvements. The plan is to use it to improve the shared spaces around the college to continue James' (2018/2019 VP) efforts to make the bar and other places feel more homely.

I hope you've enjoyed this year as much as I have, even if it was cut short. Ustinov is meant to be a home and a place for socialising and facilities are a big part of that.

Q: Did you find out anything about the tap not working at the Observatory?

A: *I'm working on it, and will make sure I press this issue when the relevant staff are back in work tomorrow. In addition, the vending machine has also broken in the last couple of weeks and unfortunately will need to be professionally repaired. I am looking into this but a lot of places have staff on furlough this is a work in progress.*

d. Bar Steward [AL]

This year the bar and café have significantly increased the attention we pay to our allergens relations. Whilst the bar has always been regularly well cleaned by our bar staff, the introduction of free-from options in the bar has directed our attention towards possible areas of contamination between foods and drink. New chopping boards, knives, milk jugs etc were purchased and labelled. Training on the use of these items and the preparation of hot food could be improved, but the implementation of such training was hindered by the coronavirus outbreak. We did, however, implement a new system of cleaning the post-mix tubes and signing off on the gas/keg refills, which has helped Trudie to keep stock.

The free-from food has had some success, especially the soya milk, though some of the trialled products did not sell well. One vegan cookie tasted too much like sand to be reordered. We had a few issues with milk stocking, both soya and normal. After negotiating, we have started reselling glasses and pints of milk. This has been a huge success.

A few events this year have had themed cocktails and mocktails, many of which featured truly terrible puns. The cocktails containing coffee seemed particularly popular, meaning our coffee machine has been put to good use. The advertising around mocktails was stepped up and seemed to be effective in showing our range of products. I found that I often used 'cocktails' as an all-encompassing term for alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks, but that this was not as effective in advertising as clearly stating 'cocktails and mocktails'. I had planned to introduce more box ciders etc to the fridges but the ciders we had took a very long time to sell meaning we did not feel the need to order more for fear of wasting stock.

Sadly, no college drink has yet been decided upon. I had planned to do a vote, but then procrastinated away my pre-pandemic time.

The bar prices are set to increase next year. After university discussions, it has been decided that bar staff will receive a pay increase, and as a result the prices will increase slightly. Our bar, as I hear from Ian, has long made the longest loss in the university. This is, I believe, a result of our wages being considerably higher due to our age and our lack of other colleges visiting the bar. To avoid coming under scrutiny, as a supervisor team we decided to cut back on how many people worked the quiet shifts. Often we found that three people were scheduled to work a shift that could easily be done by two people in a busier bar. There were a few hiccups with staffing levels at the start of this term, but generally this has worked well.

Q: You mentioned you're not increasing box sizes, does that mean you're not going to be getting more boxes at the same time or you're just not going to buy more cider? Because some people did like it.

A: *Definitely we will be replacing those when they go but also get a much wider range to really fill up the fridge as the cider isn't selling very quickly. I'm sure people would have bought it in Summer but sadly that has not been able to happen. We do love suggestions on stock so do keep sending in suggestions.*

e. Clubs and Societies Officer [RR]

The past few weeks have been rather uneventful for clubs and societies. The college gym remains closed until further notice, as do all sports facilities we normally have access to (the Durham School and Durham High School for Girls). Some of our societies remain active — including the Choir which now has a Facebook page and has offered us a (remote) video performance which I encourage everyone to check out. It is obviously impossible to predict how the year ahead will go but I, as well as whoever takes up the position of Clubs & Societies officer next year, will obviously keep everyone posted as the year goes! *We have ongoing work to try and establish new societies such as swimming and gardening. The machines in the gym are now successfully connected to the internet most of the time.*

Team Ustinov is also entering into two competitions. The first one is a Strava running club: Strava is a running app that allows you to share your running stats with other people — join the Strava group (link on Team Ustinov's Facebook page) if you like running and you can add your running stats to the club; all colleges send their running stats regularly and there is an ongoing running competition. The second competition is an online sports competition involving a bunch of weekly challenges — we won the first instalment of the competition thanks to Christos sending a video of a very cool bin trick shot but no one has taken part in the second instalment. I will keep posting about these on Team Ustinov's Facebook page if you want to get involved! The next challenge will begin on June 1st.

The Festival of Sports is also an event that was due to take place in a few days but is obviously cancelled. However, Team Durham has decided to look into an online Festival which could involve a number of events including darts (over Zoom), e-sports (including a FIFA competition), a Strava competition and 'mind games' (like chess). If you have any idea of other virtual events the university could hold for the festival of sports, do not hesitate to get in touch tonight and I will send the proposals to Team Durham before the deadline (June 1st). This could be a fun way for Ustinov

College to get involved and, who knows, maybe we can steal the victory away from all the other colleges this year!

f. Communications Officer [ML]

This academic year, I was communications officer who was mainly responsible for maintaining the overall communications between the GCR and college members. The communication channels that I used to circulate news in college included email, Facebook, Instagram, WeChat and WhatsApp Groups etc. I possessed the overall responsibility of the GCR's advertising for upcoming events such as formal dinners, Ustinov Live, Pub Quiz, in an effective and timely manner. This was accomplished through facilitating a good communication between fellow exec members to be aware of which events or news need to be published on newsletters. I also coordinated with the Social Secretary and Social Committee regarding the planning of new events in order to stay vigilant in undertaking the communications duty. Attended weekly GCR meetings to ensure the smooth flow of communication between all GCR exec members and raised any queries I had regarding my role, as I was quite new to the position.

g. Acting DSU Representative [AH]

We did not have a DSU Liaison Officer this year.

It has been an interesting year for the DSU. Many students have sadly had to leave Durham due to lockdown measures. As such, many have been limited in their ability to campaign and put pressure on the University. In these circumstances, it is vital that students have strong representation in the DSU, as these sabbatical officers still have many meetings with senior members of the University.

David, the current PG Academic Affairs Officer, has made significant progress on improving the payments given to PG students who teach and demonstrate. All PG students should now be paid for mandatory training, and PGs, in general, should be receiving a pay rise. He has also raised how inadequate the financial aid application process is for PG students.

The DSU has been lobbying several of the purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA) providers to cancel contracts for those who have left due to lockdown, with some success. Additionally, Officers were helping to promote problems that we raised with the University's plans to prevent PG students from graduating in the Summer congregation ceremonies. This was a poorly planned decision by the University and another example of how they treat PG students poorly compared to UG students. With this year's summer congregation cancelled due to lockdown, it is uncertain as to when PG students will be allowed to congregate, and what provisions will be provided for them.

Recently, Assembly was held online for the first time. While not a perfect setup—non-voting members were not allowed to attend—this is a vital step in improving accessibility, which should help increase attendance. By preventing access to members of the DSU, an exception to one of the standing orders had to be made. While the Trustees of the DSU have allowed this given the extraordinary circumstances that the country is now facing, it is worth noting that previously this year the DSU has displayed almost astonishing levels of inflexibility when it comes to

the interpretation of its governing documents. An example of this would be the decision to remove the secondary votes of anyone who voted for RON first in the recent Officer elections, despite the election being run using a Single Transferrable Vote (STV) format. The trustees allowed this, as the election was set up using a STV system, despite the vote not actually being transferred. Many student groups and colleges have deeply criticised the handling of this election.

The DSU is currently taking part in a democracy review. The first phase has been completed, and results are available on the DSU website. The new Opportunities Office will be beginning the next stage of the Democracy Review in the next academic year. More information, and the opportunity to provide input into this review, is available on the website.

Q: How do they make an £85K loss when they have a budget that is close to a million?

A: *Part of the funding comes from DSU societies and levies and paying for events, which have all had to be cancelled due to Covid. Actually, compared to many other students' unions across the country, the DSU is in quite a good financial state. Many students' unions didn't have any redundancy, in the North East about 45% didn't have 3 months. The DSU believes it can cover for the £85,000 loss.*

Q: Some of the other colleges had chosen to disassociate from the DSU. Is Ustinov considering this and what is the reason behind this?

A: *About 4 colleges have decided to disassociate from the DSU. At the moment, Ustinov GCR have not made a decision either way of how we will handle this. It has been noted by members of the GCR that the DSU provides welfare training to our officers such as the president and the welfare team, and I believe anyone else who wants to go. This is quite important because our welfare team isn't as large as other colleges so we want to make sure that everyone who is involved with it has as much training as possible. I think going forward, Ustinov should pay close attention to the Democracy Review and look at the results of this before making any decision.*

h. International Students Officer [SH]

The role of ISO has been an interesting one for a number of reasons. From planning trips to dealing with Exec meetings on a weekly basis, I've had the opportunity to work with some brilliant people and learn from them about Ustinov and the work that the GCR does. Having completed this term, I feel like it's been nothing short of a fulfilling experience. Even though I was a little late to join, the experience has been most meaningful.

Over the last year, we have been on a few trips. The first was to York. Students were taken to the beautiful city and got a chance to check out the amazing markets and the beautiful Cathedral. The trip, much like the others, was during the day, with students leaving in the morning and returning by evening. The next trip was to Fountains Abbey. Students got a chance to check out a world heritage site that is almost a thousand years old. While we did have more trips planned, the unfortunate impact of the pandemic made us put those plans on hold. However, I trust that the trips that did pan out were enjoyable.

Apart from our fun trips, the Ustinov GCR has celebrated a number of cultural events, from Diwali and Holi to Christmas and more. We tried our level best to

ensure international representation of diverse cultures, living up to the Ustinov Motto. We also celebrated other holidays like Halloween and New Years! While we tried our level best at each step, it was regrettable that some of our plans were met with a halt due to the ongoing situation.

During this period, we have introduced International Students' contact sessions. In doing so, I have had the opportunity to hear out a lot of you and learn about your struggles. Some have been addressed and some were beyond our reach. But the best part about these sessions was that we were able to work together as a community to resolve a lot of the problems that we were faced with. From introducing more representation through different celebrations to finding a way to help each other learn new skills to better settle into life in Durham.

While I would like to believe that as ISO I did the best I could, considering other commitments and circumstances, I am conscious of unintentional error. As such, I hope that they will be viewed with indulgence and that you will accept my apologies. I am grateful to everyone on the GCR committee and to all Ustinovians for entrusting me into the role. I am particularly grateful to executive committee who have in all cases helped me better settle into the role and guided my decisions whenever I was confused.

For anyone choosing to run for ISO next, I wish you luck and I hope you'll have as much fun on the job as I have. To everyone in Ustinov, thank you and I hope that once all of this is over, we are able to meet again. I hope we'll remain in touch! Stay well!

i. Livers Out Representative [SK]

I have been representing the students currently living out of Ustinov since February 2019 and it's been a great experience till now. In terms of my report, I started work with increasing communication between Ustinovians who are not residing in the college by encouraging dialogue, disseminating information about events organised for Ustinovians both at Ustinov and outside. I targeted private student accommodations and areas that are not too close to the college and spread word about events, office hours and the exec as a whole for any grievances, help or a friendly chat for livers out. We also undertook office hours outside of Ustinov closer to the Science site to cut the travel time to Ustinov for livers out wherein Amy and I decided to take turns doing office hours during the day and while my chance to sit on the rotation could not come up due to Covid-19, we had livers out reach out to us with the help they required, thus it was a fruitful activity.

One of the major concerns for livers out was the travelling to and from the college on days when trips or formals were organised and after discussions with some of the students, talk about taxis and discounts for travelling to their accommodations from social events and an additional stop for buses during day trips in the centre of the town was underway. Unfortunately, no further trips or social events were possible due to Covid-19.

Coming to the activities during lock-down, while the majority of livers out have now left Durham - certain students who are residing in private accommodations have been facing problems pertaining to rent and facilities in their accommodations. This was discussed in detail in GCR executive meetings and the GCR, as well as the Student union, are constantly working through the process of getting a favourable response from the landlord and owner companies in question. The Durham SU has also formally written to individual accommodation companies requesting them to

co-operate and help students with easing their monetary burden. A detailed information chart about this housing pledge is available on the SU's page. While some of the companies have been positive and quick in their response, we are still awaiting an answer from some and Diana has very kindly requested the SU to send them a formal reminder. Fingers crossed for the livers out staying at these private accommodations.

As a collective, the GCR has been doing a lot of social media out-reach including the really popular Instagram takeovers from our members. I would just like to once again remind you that I am in Durham, Ustinovians can reach out to me whenever they wish with any kind of help they require!

j. Social Secretary [JI]

It is safe to say that this year has not exactly gone as we had all planned. We all wish that we could be back in Durham and making the most of what time we have left under the banner of our University and college. Luckily, for Ustinovians, we have been an exceptionally active community right up until the onset of COVID-19. We have engaged in events ranging from bar crawls and quiz's to jazz evenings and formals. This last academic year has been a busy one for the GCR and exec members too, riddled with office hours and committee meetings and it has been a privilege to watch so many individuals come together for nothing more than their love for their college.

Sadly, with the world adjusting to the 'new normal', participating in college life has become infinitely more difficult for each of us. We have newfound responsibilities, drastic changes to adjust to and deadlines to hit but yet, Ustinov is striving to provide the support and relief that we all need in these difficult times. We are continuing with our quiz nights, we are preparing for Ustinov Live...online, we are beginning to implement games nights to provide a fresh experience to our college members. On top of this, the GCR and executive committee are continuing to plan for the Ustinov summer BBQ in whatever form it may be possible. We are meeting several times a week to keep things on track to help maintain some form of familiarity and connectedness with a pre-Covid way of life.

Regarding next year, it is difficult to imagine what life will be like at the University of Durham. Many of you as well as myself will be moving on. However, we have fortunately had a number of manifesto's for next year's GCR and executive positions so I imagine that Ustinov will be in good hands. What college life will look like next year, I do not know but like many of you, I am thankful that I got to spend the 19/20 academic year in good company here at the college and could not imagine it being any other way. I hope that you are all well and staying safe during these extraordinarily strange times and wish you nothing but the best in your future endeavours.

As ever,

James Patrick Ireland
Social Secretary

Q: What plans are being made for online events and online strategy for next year? If we do have the University's "Plan B" where a lot of events are run online. What kind of events will run and what will be the frequency of events?

A: For now, it's still very much early days. We're still carrying on with quiz nights and Connor is currently trialling Ustinov Live to see if we can move it online, and we are still trying to find a way to make the BBQ work virtually. If everything is online next year, the frequency of events might need to be cranked up to keep people involved with the college with us all having to keep our distance from one another. We are hoping to sort some virtual game nights as well. We're all just having to adapt and learn as quickly as we can so the next academic year people aren't falling short.

Connor: Following on from Sarah Prescott's response earlier, at the moment we don't really have enough information from University to concretely plan what we want induction week to look like. What's being implied is that we will have a mixture of students physically in Ustinov at Sheraton and some doing some distance learning so our hope is once we have a better idea of numbers and what social distancing will be in place at the time, we can figure out what we can physically do in the bar and how to extend those same ideas out so that everyone can participate. Our general intention is that we will try and physically run events here but make sure they are accessible to people not resident in Durham rather than having to split things up. For example, try and run quizzes in parallel or something like Ustinov Live if it can also be streamed from location, but in general we are playing it by ear until we have more information about induction week.

k. Welfare Officer [BR]

After I took over after the AGM last summer, we followed tradition and held a stress-less summer with adult colouring books and pencils in the bar. We also held a dog day with the Northumberland Wag n Wheel Newfoundland group and the Chuchó's taco truck. The day was a success, engaging the students and the local residents and we had hoped to repeat the day this summer, but Covid got in the way; I hope that this can be repeated in future years. I also attended welfare training at the DSU, with Diana and Connor, which was helpful in planning for the year, hopefully something similar will run again this year for incoming exec. During the GMs over the summer we proposed several changes to the standing orders to the role of the welfare committee, including creating the role of Disability Representative and adding the ISO and the Livers' Out Representative to the wider welfare committee to help student concerns to be addressed.

In preparation for the start of the year, I got in touch with the university counselling and disability services, alongside the local sexual health services to put together information packs and information emails for the incoming students. I also rationalised the welfare supplies, throwing out some condoms that went out of date a decade ago! I have now clearly labelled the expiry dates on the welfare supplies to help with the handover. We only had to order one batch on condoms this year, and there are still some left for the start of next year, this alongside not having any events in the late epiphany or summer terms resulted in the welfare team coming in well under budget.

During the first GM of the year we filled all the positions on the welfare team (including the newly created Disability Representative position) and two of the positions were contested. The welfare team has been amazing this year, and I'd like to thank them for everything they have done. At the start of the year, we held welfare drop-in sessions twice a week, although, low demand meant that we moved into the regular welfare rota with when the welfare team would be present being advertised. This was also done in the previous academic year and it is likely to be the

case in future academic years. However, I hope that future welfare officers continue to have separate welfare drop-ins at the start of the year to increase awareness of what the welfare team can do and that we are here even if, they are not continued throughout the year.

The welfare team hosted several campaigns mostly with a pub quiz, alongside other members of the exec and committee, including for mental health week, women's history month and LGBT history month. We also planned to host a Drag Show, planned by Nicole our LGBT Representative, initially as part of LGBT history month but after some unforeseen circumstances we postponed the event to take place in May, to fit in with the week running up to Durham Pride. However, this ultimately had to be cancelled due to Covid -19.

Jess, the Women's Welfare Representative, organised a collection for a local shelter in county Durham, of clothing, toiletries and other household donations. We have had a large number of donations, and would like to thank everybody who has donated, and we will organise delivery of the donations at a point when it becomes safe to do so. The welfare team also proposed changing the title of the Male and Female Welfare Representatives to the Men's and Women's Welfare Representatives to allow the positions to be more inclusive, and this was passed at a general meeting.

This year the welfare officer started having bi-weekly meetings with College's wellbeing team. This has enabled us to raise issues with college and to work together to get positive changes. We created gender neutral bathrooms in both Neville House and Sheraton House and college were able to place shelving units in the disabled/gender neutral bathrooms so we can now provide welfare supplies in there too. We also worked with college to provide clear signage for the sanitary bins in college accommodation, translated into eight languages. Hopefully, these meetings will continue with future welfare officers to keep making small changes in college that will help the lives of Ustinovians.

The Covid-19 crisis has hugely affected the lives of Ustinovians, and we have tried to provide information about how to access support services through emails and social media posts. Alongside other members of the exec and committee we have provided information about free and relatively cheap activities you can do from home during the lockdown, including discounts on workout and meditation apps. We will continue to provide information of support available as we get it and to help direct queries that people have to college and the university via Diana. Some members of the exec and wider committee created a lockdown diary on Instagram, which received positive comments from students. Wider use of social media could be something utilised by future welfare committees.

5. Agenda Items

a. 2018-19 Accounts [VB]

- i. Proposal: *To pass the 2018-19 Accounts subject to the final audit from the accountant being complete.*

Proposer: Vera Bieber

Secunder: Connor Armstrong

- ii. Supporting Information: The spreadsheet with the accounts was sent out to all Ustinov students with the agenda.

Every year the GCR has to submit their accounts to the charities commission. They are submitted 10 months after the end of the financial year, so the end of June. These are the 2018-19 accounts, which mostly cover payments conducted during the previous Treasurer's tenure. They are currently being audited by the accountant.

Vote: *Unfortunately, due to people leaving the Zoom call during the meeting, quorum was not maintained for voting so an emergency meeting will be held to vote on all the agenda items.*

b. 2020-21 GCR Budget [VB]

- i. Proposal: *To pass a budget of £72,045.00 for the 2020/21 year based off an estimated income of £63,600.00.*

For the past two years we have been passing annual budgets for the upcoming academic years at our Annual General Meetings which have been very helpful for the executive committees to track their spendings and ensure that they fit within the big picture. Therefore, we have drafted a budget for the 2020-21 academic year. *It would make sense for next year's exec to pass another budget when they have a better idea of the situation next year. An assumption was made that the composition fee would be reduced by 20% but we don't yet know the amount. The induction week budget has been increased due to potentially holding two induction weeks. The Summer Ball budget has been decreased as we have already paid a deposit for the venue at Ramside Hall. We are expecting fewer members and to sell fewer gym memberships. We hope that by next summer it will be possible to have the BBQ and some students from this year can return to enjoy it. The overall aim for us as a charity is also to break even, but it will be a difficult year financially next year so we hope that the surplus this year will help with the problems of next year.*

Proposer: Vera Bieber

Secunder: Rebecca Salthouse

Q: How can spending be higher than income?

A: *We are planning to have a deficit on next year's budget with a higher expenditure than income, which will be funded out of the surplus we are making this year.*

Q: Can we use the surplus from this year to help students now?

A: *I don't know how. There is not really anything we can do at this point. It is not feasible to refund levies as we have 280 members.*

Q: This budget seems to be a perturbed version of last year's budget and the year before, based on Plan A that everything can get back to normal next year. Would there be another budget if University's Plan B goes ahead when lots of things move online and social spaces have a cut capacity working at 20%. Is it worth putting together a smaller budget with reference to online events?

A: *The thing is we don't really know what is going to happen. This is an optimistic budget with social events. We can afford it as we are making a surplus this year. As the weeks progress towards the beginning of the next academic year hopefully the new exec will hear more about the next year and can pass another budget if necessary. This is the most optimistic view at the moment and the new exec will have to continuously adjust their budgeting expectations.*

Q: I feel like this budget isn't just an optimistic budget, for example breaking down Induction week so specifically, it seems unrealistic as the University has said there aren't going to be lectures next term. Breaking down the budget so specifically into social events, for the first term in particular, is maybe not so useful as the next exec will have to pass another budget as the money will not be used on these things. It may be worth passing another budget that is more general and not specifically broken down into social events, and can also facilitate online events.

A: *The induction week budget also covers a second induction week in January. The online difference between online and physical events is that online events cost nothing or less and this budget can just be used as a guide as we don't know what events will be possible.*

Diana – we don't currently have the exact plan from University. We aim to work to Plan A currently because if that happens then this budget is realistic but if this doesn't happen then we will have more time to pass a second budget. This is why Vera has worked on having Plan A as a base as it is more complicated, and it is the plan that might happen first.

Q: Given that you are expecting GCR membership numbers to drop next year, will it be worth considering dropping the GCR levies considerably? Especially if we end up on having the majority of events online.

A: *At the moment we are just two or three months too early to know a lot of things. When the next term gets closer, I'm hoping we will know more about what kind of events we'll be able to run and based on this we will make decisions on GCR membership fees.*

Would it be possibly to commit to a review of the GCR levy in a month's time?

Maybe 2/3 months would definitely make sense.

If we go ahead with this budget as written and it turns out that in the first months of the academic year, we get income from levies but we go into a second lockdown and then cannot put on more events, what would be done with the extra money? What is the plan if we get the income expected on this sheet and not the expenditure?

Some expenditures will happen either way independent of the circumstances, such as insurances. Hopefully by next summer the BBQ will be able to go ahead.

Can we get a separate list on expenditures we know will definitely happen regardless of how lockdown is operating?

If we had no social events then the expenditure would be the facilities that need to be maintained (e.g. gym equipment maintenance), the insurances and TV subscriptions.

ii. Supporting Information:

While the 2019-20 year will likely end with an unexpectedly high surplus due to Covid-19, we believe that the pandemic will lead to a significant decline in our income next year: the university is trying to save money wherever it can which will likely impact our composition fee and with fewer students being present in Durham and social distancing measures in place it will be harder to encourage new students to become GCR members. Furthermore, if there will be two main waves of arrivals (September & January), we will need to organise two Induction Weeks to make the students feel welcome and to give them a real Ustinov experience. We are therefore budgeting to make a loss of £8,445.00, which will be funded through the surplus made this year.

Vote: *Unfortunately, due to people leaving the Zoom call during the meeting, quorum was not maintained for voting so an emergency meeting will be held to vote on all the agenda items. There were also problems with multiple people viewing the meeting on one device and so had technical issues with voting. These issues will be resolved for the emergency meeting.*

c. **BBQ Budget [CA]**

After some long discussions between the exec and also with all our trustees, it sadly seems as though the 2020 Summer BBQ will not be able to go ahead in its usual form. While we still have over 2 months to go, it is very unlikely the Covid-19 outbreak in the UK will have progressed far enough to hold a normal event. We considered trying to put on a scaled back, socially-distanced event but this doesn't seem feasible. Many people have already left Durham and may not return for a while and those that remain would only attend if they were certain it would be safe. We certainly couldn't justify spending the full budget on such an event. In addition, the GCR has responsibilities to our members and to the general public and I don't think we could guarantee regulations would be followed throughout.

We did contemplate moving the event to later in the summer, and perhaps to a venue which would better lend itself to social distancing but again we don't see this as a workable alternative. It would be better to instead plough the same money into making the 2021 BBQ event bigger and put a focus on reaching out to alumni (especially recent graduates) and invite them back to celebrate what they couldn't this time around.

We are instead looking into online/ virtual alternatives for August 1st. While none of these will be able to live up to the spectacle of our usual BBQs, we are hoping that we could still run an event that will bring people together and provide a few hours or even most of an afternoon and evening of entertainment.

We are beginning to test out possible tech to do this sort of this, with the aim of using the Ustinov Live in a couple of weeks to see how engaged people get and how comfortable we are in handling a bigger streamed event. With this in mind, we have two budget proposals, representing the two different possibilities we can see at the moment.

Regardless of budget, attendees will only be present virtually, either through participating in the live comment stream or joining chat rooms on Discord. We may additionally have a Zoom call (or equivalent) running but we don't expect that this would be open to all (although we may invite individuals to join occasionally). Event highlights would include:

- Music - either live or pre-recorded (but intended to sound live rather than like a studio recording). This might (hopefully) also include a group performance, featuring recordings of a large number of Ustinovians.
- Online college awards ceremony - with expanded set of awards to allow for recognition of more Ustinovians in some less serious categories.
- Contests on the day, such as having the best outfit or designing a theme-appropriate drink.
- We are also planning on suggesting a possible menu with the bar steward offering a masterclass on how to make simple cocktails/ mocktails.
- Quizzes and games: our aim here is to adapt the weekly pub quiz to make it easier for many people to participate without having to faff around with technology. We may also incorporate simple games, either using online platforms (like Jackbox) or following the format of radio panel games.
- Playlist compiled by Ustinovians - whenever there is some down time between acts/ events we will run a playlist assembled from requests submitted before (and even during) the event for people to enjoy together.

Initially a poll will be held to find which of the following options should be put forward to a motion. The motion will then be voted on.

The budget proposals:

i. Option 1: Virtual Ustinov Day

Physical presence with stage and tech team to broadcast live music from location (possibly from Ustinov Bar).

This will mean the event should feel noticeably different from an online stream and we can try and capture some of the atmosphere of a live performance. The tech

team that we usually hire also have professional expertise in this area, meaning we will not be solely reliant on committee and Ustinovians to ensure things run smoothly. We have recently been in touch with them and they have been running similar events for the music industry and are confident that this can be done safely for volunteers, tech crew and performers (they have a number of established precautions that we would put into place to maintain social distancing).

The intention here is that the staged music will be of a standard that makes it worth the extra budget. We aim to use multiple cameras to capture the live performances and enough audio equipment to fully capture the ambience of a live band, such that the sections we record to stream ourselves will approach the quality of a real concert. This will be interwoven with segments pre-recorded by Ustinovians and non-music entertainment as listed above.

Total: £3000, broken into

£1300, tech crew + gear hire

£400 tech redundancy (unexpected costs eg extra audiovisual equipment, venue hire)

£1000, talent

£300, redundancy

Q: How many people would need to be physically present in Durham?

A: *We would anticipate one professional, 6 or 7 additional volunteers to help out and on top of that any bands that are performing. If space is a concern, we would get in smaller bands. It would be less than 20 people in total and we would ensure everyone is social distancing throughout.*

ii. Option 2: Ustinov Live ++

This will be relatively similar to the online Ustinov Live event but with a small budget to see if we can find some external acts who are able and willing to record performances for us to stream.

Total: £700, broken into

£500, talent

£200, redundancy

Q: Will it be worth spending money in tech equipment that would be kept in the college for online transmissions for recordings, podcasts etc.?

A: *Possibly. The issue here is that a chunk of the tech part of this budget involves getting a professional team in to help us. In the long run if we are looking to do more online events then I would say yes, purchasing equipment is maybe something to look at. Even if we spent our money on this additional equipment, we wouldn't necessarily know how to use it properly so would have to increase the £3000 by a lot for us to buy our own equipment and include professional support. We do already have sufficient equipment to record sound just not video but you can borrow video recording equipment from CIS which would not cost anything.*

iii. Option 3: Ustinov Live

If this budget doesn't pass, we can still try and run an online only event. This will rely solely on Ustinovians to provide performances and so will generally be a smaller event, similar to the Ustinov Live performance we are looking at holding in June.

Q: Is it possible to check with College Management to see if there is any possibility of advertising the event through the official college website, or potentially providing a link through Alumni or incoming students through e-mail?

A: *Yes absolutely we will absolutely do that. Incoming students is also a great idea.*

Q: I think this is a really nice ambitious proposal of trying to do an online event on a scale that other colleges have not tried yet and it is a credit to plan for events that would be helpful next year. What is the scale you are expecting for the event, are you planning on advertising it to locals? How are you going to facilitate communication between people who are watching the stream?

A: *Yes the main reason the Ustinov summer BBQ is not generally open to other students and local residents is that we have a finite budget and do not want to disadvantage Ustinov students and their families from attending. For an online event you can have as many participants without any extra cost so we can advertise it to as many people as we want. For communication on the day we haven't finalised this yet. It will be live streamed on Facebook and YouTube so there is a comment stream for anyone watching. The aim will be the tech team/presenting team/committee would be in a position to respond to those either live or near live depending on what else is going on. If we end up running some kind of Zoom call then we can invite people in briefly if they have something to contribute. We could also have a dedicated email account that will be checked throughout the day.*

Q: How many Ustinovians do you think will attend the summer BBQ online? At least one third of the previous turnout to justify this ca. One third of the previous budget?

A: *We don't know, it's hard to tell. Our aim with advertisement is to have as high a reach as possible. I would like to think we would expect a higher turnout if anything as it is not restricted to people only in Durham or people who have the entire day free. I think the turnout will be higher than expected for a normal college day as long as we advertise it well enough.*

Vote: *Unfortunately, due to people leaving the Zoom call during the meeting, quorum was not maintained for voting so an emergency meeting will be held to vote on all the agenda items.*

d. HLM for Miriah Reynolds [AB]

- i. Proposal: *I nominate Miriah Reynolds for an Honorary Life Membership in the GCR, in appreciation for her service as Treasurer 2013/14 and Eco Rep 2014/15, during which time she launched the Green Move-Out Sale, a project she continued to organise even after her Eco Rep tenure. Miriah also remained on-call for some years afterward, ready to hold GCR office hours when staff were called away, respond to esoteric queries about historical GCR practices, and*

generally lend a hand whenever asked, especially during the crush of Induction Weeks.

Proposer: Alexander Blair

Seconder: Vera Bieber

Vote: Unfortunately, due to people leaving the Zoom call during the meeting, quorum was not maintained for voting so an emergency meeting will be held to vote on all the agenda items.

6. Hustings

a. President

Candidate: Diana Martinez

Manifesto:

Hi, my name is Diana and I would love to continue being your President, I am from Mexico and a PhD student in Engineering. I'm organised, open-minded and team-oriented. I have the necessary experience and passion to handle the 10 and more demands of this role. For the past year, I have served as President in the GCR and have gained a lot of experience on this role, there are still some changes that I have not been able to finish due to the current circumstances but would love to finish them, like improving the engagement of GCR into University and College matters. Before this role, I was also the President of the Mexican Society so I am quite familiar with how things work and appreciate the level of commitment required to take on this responsibility.

Overall, our GCR is well-run by hardworking volunteers, and my main aim is to continue the good work and build upon it. As an international student, I understand how difficult it is to live in a new culture, away from family – so my major focus will continue into building on our sense of community. I'll do this by ensuring that the students who come to Ustinov feel involved, whether physically or online and then maintain momentum by regularly organising inclusive events that reinforce our "Ustinov family vibe" - brunches, food trucks, picnics/walks/day-trips.

Finally, I would also like to increase our relationship with University and College and continue working on collaborations between GCP and GCR to organise activities and events that have broad appeal amongst students.

Hust:

Hi everyone, my name is Diana, I am the current GCR president and I would like to run for next year as there are some things I want to finish with college and University, such as updating the memorandum of agreement. I also want to keep working with the sense of community that we are trying to build in the GCR. I want to continue with having more events, depending on the circumstances. You know me I work very hard so that's it! I have a lot of experience, last year I was the president of the Mexican society, so I have a lot of experience and I am very hard working. I am in the third year of my PhD and believe it or not I am working on both things. I don't have a social life so it gives me a lot of time to work for the GCR, the GCR is my social life! I am an international student from Mexico and I hope you would like me to continue with the post working with the GCR.

Questions:

Q: What's your favourite cheese?

A: *I would say brie but I also tasted a delicious smooth cheese at the Jazz night but I don't know what it was.*

Q: What do you think the GCR should focus on the most next year considering it will be very different?

A: *We should focus on support for International students because we don't know how things will continue. Also, we have to focus on welfare in general because we are postgrads, if you are PGR and have no access to the lab then you may have a lot of work pending and it could be a cause for stress when the labs reopen. We will focus on welfare more as well as social distancing events.*

Q: Usually each president brings a different approach for their year, is there anything you could change for this year?

A: *I think I could bring a different approach. For this year my approach was on local residents and the community so this year I want to focus more on the Ustinovian feeling and make it feel like you are really a part of a college.*

b. Chairperson

Candidate: Connor Armstrong

Manifesto:

Hi, I'm Connor, a 2nd year theoretical physics student. Most of you have probably seen me around this year; both online and in person. I've been involved in the GCR since my first term at Durham and would like to continue helping Ustinovians enjoy their time here as much as I am. I have therefore decided to run for the position of chair.

My time in the GCR has already given me some knowledge of the standing orders and constitution. I spent some time acting as chair last summer so already have a little practice at running meetings – making sure everyone's opinions get heard and keeping things running smoothly. This will be even more important over the next year as we are adapting to the changes in how we do things. It seems likely that some GMs next year will need to be split between online and physical which will be a new challenge. My time as VP has also meant I have experience as a trustee and the responsibilities the GCR has as a charity.

As well as the duties of chair, I also want to continue helping with other GCR events – such as Ustinov Live and the Summer BBQ. If required, I will also be happy to continue assisting the exec and other committees with things like the GCR website and mailing list administration.

While the next year is set to be distinctly abnormal, I believe we can still offer postgrads a great experience!

Hust:

Hi I'm Connor, I'm a second year PhD student, I'm guessing all of you have seen me around Ustinov at some point this year as I have been vice president. I have really enjoyed this experience, helping to run events and help keep Ustinov going and I would like to continue to help the GCR run a great programme and support students.

As part of the role of Chair I want to help GM's run as smoothly as possible and put in some time to improve some of the snags in the online system but seen as this is only the second online GM we have run we don't have a lot of data to go on. I also have some past experience, I acted as chair last year over the summer so I have some experience of chairing meetings and checking over standing orders of the constitution to help solve problems. I have been a trustee for the past year so already know a bit about the responsibilities involved there. I think that is everything. Also I'm hungry.

Questions:

Q: The issue with quorum, especially given the online system it might be possible to reach out a bit more, do you have any idea about how you could encourage people to attend our meetings? Especially with the issue of if will there be enough students coming.

A: *A big part of this is to make the run up to induction week and induction week as impressive as possible even if it is not physically in Durham. Hopefully if students like what is happening they will be more likely to run for positions and be involved in events even if they aren't physically in Durham. Aside from keeping up with the time limits we had on officer reports, I'm not sure what else I would do as it is harder to bribe people with food. We could also look into some other kind of loyalty rewards but I don't think we'd want to go too far with bribing people.*

Q: As you mentioned, this is our second online GM, one which went quite well and the other I'll leave up to you to decide. Bearing in mind we will have a few online GMs next year, what suggestions would you have to improve the format?

A: *If you have a steering committee you can delegate an amount of the vote counting to them. We can potentially play around with online voting systems and see if Google docs is the best option, given we already have a list of members and student numbers we could use a system that uses this to help verify votes. It would be a case of testing out voting systems before the meeting on the committee and see what is best to run.*

Q: The structure of the GCR will likely be significantly different next year, and some roles will likely be much more important (eg. Tech Officer) whereas some will be much less (eg. Formals, if we can't run them). Will you adapt the committee structure to address the unique challenges of the year, and how will you encourage people to run for positions?

A: *There are obviously limits to what we can change given all the committee roles are established in the standing orders with responsibilities. However, there is nothing to stop us giving the committee additional or adapted responsibilities to cope with what needs doing. We could get other committee members to help out as required. The skills you want in a formal secretary can be adapted to other types of events and it would also be about collective responsibility so the whole social committee would be involved in decisions.*

Q: Will you need to make any adaptations to the standing orders or anything temporarily during this unusual period?

A: *I honestly don't know yet but if we find some obstruction to prevent us from acting sensibly then we would have to make amendments then. I would be reluctant to amend the standing orders for anything that is hopefully temporary but I can*

certainly see cases where we may want to ask the members if we can amend things to make our lives easier during exceptional circumstances. It would be something to run past the trustees to see if our proposals are sensible before we run anything through but it is definitely something we can look into.

c. Clubs and Societies Officer

Candidate: Christos Vlahos

Manifesto:

Hello, my name is Christos and I'm running for the position of Clubs and Societies Officer. I'm currently in my third year of my PhD (still have one more to go) and for the last two years I've been a Sports Representative for the GCR. That means I already have some experience with many topics and procedures related to the clubs and societies and of course with the way the GCR is working. Of course the officer position comes with bigger responsibilities but I think my experience will help me cope with the new challenges. I understand that the next year will be a very challenging one as we still don't know what will be the situation with the pandemic. The college will most probably be affected by it in terms of number of students, event organisation etc but also more specifically the GCR societies and the gym will possibly face a tough time. For that I'll try my best to ensure that all our societies can still work under safe conditions and contribute in making college life run as smoothly as possible for all Ustinovians.

Hust: *Hi everyone I'm Christos. I have been in a relevant position for the past few years as one of the sports reps for the GCR. Going into my final year I would like to have more responsibility in the GCR and have a bigger role. I think the experience I have had in the last few years of organising events will be helpful even though things will be different next year. Clubs and societies will be heavily affected by the pandemic. We don't know if sports will continue to run or if the gym will be open so we will have to wait and see how things are going over the summer. However, I am pretty sure we can do quite a few things to keep students interested in joining new societies with common interests and starting up a few more non-competitive societies. It's hard to say too many specific things now as we don't know how the situation will be from September onwards but hopefully we can find things to keep people interested in joining a club or society.*

Questions:

Q: If you could start a new society what would it be?

A: *I haven't thought personally of starting a new society but new people arriving in September may be interested in starting a new club. Examples could be some sort of sports related club, for example fans of premier league or any other can of sport can start a society to discuss topics about this and maybe watch games together.*

Q: How would you raise the presence of Team Ustinov?

A: *We are trying to push our clubs on social media and make them more well known. It will be quite hard if there are no competitive sports happening next year. We can make small challenges every week like those from Team Durham to keep people involved and interested. We can also post more on social media about what we do but again I don't know how much will be possible.*

Q: What plans do you have to help facilitate the running of clubs and socs during the

pandemic period? How will you encourage people to join them, if they cannot be physically present in Durham?

A: One thing that could be possible is to combine competitive sports teams like football, basketball and frisbee, and add people who are interested in the sport but don't physically play it. Even if it is not possible to be physically here and play, they could still discuss these sports and what is happening professionally. It is going to be tricky to get them to physically join these clubs. We can make people aware in Induction week that we intend to keep these clubs running and see which clubs can start playing from September.

d. Secretary

Candidate: Brad Din

Manifesto:

I am a 1st year PhD, and I hope that this post of secretary will allow me to become familiar with the workings the GCR roles. Before hopefully undertaking a more time-intensive role in future years, I can take time to get settled within the PhD before jumping into something that I can't commit to.

I am an efficient typist, and can pay attention for meetings and make duly detailed minutes. I am comfortable preparing materials and undertaking activities relating to induction week. I believe that I have the ability to balance my work and commitments with this role, and can perform it efficiently and effectively.

Hust:

I'm going to keep my hust short and sweet, anything that is relevant is in my manifesto. My name is Brad, I'm a first year PhD student and I have been in Durham for the past four years for my undergrad. During my time in Durham I never had a central college of GCR admin role, I did some things with clubs and societies but never looked at how the central college and community operated. Since I got to Ustinov I realised this structure and student input really is important and it is something that I would definitely like to be a part of. The reason why I didn't get involved this year is because the structure of my course meant that I was never in Durham for a substantial amount of time but in my coming years I should have more time where I am fixed in Durham. I think Secretary would be a good role for me because I don't really have any particular details or knowledge of how the GCR operates and this could be a good opportunity to see what every committee does. I don't really know what I'm doing with my PhD so I think this will be good for me to help find my feet and see what the GCR is doing and how it operates and how I can help with this. I would be part of the exec and happy to help out with other roles that need to be filled and have flexibility to learn while I am on the job.

Questions:

Q: What's your favourite cheese?

A: *Halloumi but I can probably be swayed by a blue.*

Q: Secretaries tend to have issues getting reports in from exec on time, how do you propose to deal with this issue?

A: *I would be polite and try the typical email in advance and make sure they have the opportunity to not be pestered but frankly I would have no problems in asking them either on Facebook or if I see them at Sheraton in person. I can be persistent if I need*

to be, particularly if it is stopping me from going out and doing what I need to do. If someone needs to be prodded then I can prod away.

Q: Given meetings could now be held predominantly online, what software/features of existing software will you use to carry out your job most efficiently?

A: I wouldn't stray away from the standard way of doing things. I know there is some software which can make a transcript of the chat but I'm not sure I would trust the accuracy of this. I don't think I would do anything that is too far away from the norm. If everything is online then there could be some merit for using an online shared google doc form to adjust things as you go.

Q: Votes for running for positions is using the DUO software. Should this system not work for any reason, the votes may have to be done in person with pen and paper, and the secretary would have to help the chair count the votes, would you be willing to do this?

A: Yes.

e. International Students Officer

Candidate: Kalel Alsaeed

Manifesto:

This is Kalel Alsaeed, I am from Saudi Arabia. I received my Master's degree in Physics from Wright State University-US where I spent a year working for the International Office. Now I'm doing my PhD and this is my first year.

Hust:

Kalel was present in the meeting earlier but had to leave for another meeting as this AGM overran. He will have an opportunity to hust again at the emergency GM next week.

Candidate: Muhammad Zulkifly

Manifesto:

Being an international student always makes me curious about adapting to the local culture and the need for assimilation. If I am elected for this post, I will fulfil the needs of the international students and ensure that they live to the fullest during their time in the university.

First, I would like to organise a monthly watching Newcastle United football game live as the experience of EPL is very valuable for the international students. This can be done by engaging with the football club and if possible, getting a student discount.

Second, drawing a synergy with a welfare officer in tackling the issue of hate crimes. Based on the data from gov.uk, hate crimes in County Durham, caused by race has increased from 474 to 507, on the other hand, based on religion has increased from 67 to 78. Thus, providing a safe environment for students particularly international students is important.

Third, most of the postgraduate students in Ustinov have a family including children. Thus, organising family-friendly events and activities is indispensable for them as it

will help not only the student but their family as well to adapt to the environment and culture.

Lastly, organise a monthly event based on the continent. For instance, a particular day in a month, one can organise 'colourful Africa' and the next month 'unique Asia'. On that day, a representative from each nation of the continent can share the value (food or anything nice) of their nation with colleagues.

Hust:

My name is Muhammed. I am a first year PhD in politics and economics. I joined Durham last January. It is unfortunate for me as I did not get the chance to join any event in the GCR. For this post I am focussing on cultural diversity and safety. I am planning to organise a monthly event based on the different continents for example, a colourful Africa, we can have representatives from each nation of the continent to share for example food or information. Safety is also important, especially when we see this from the perspective of new people studying in a country they are not familiar with it will be new and uncertain for them. My plan is to draw a synergy with the welfare officer to ensure the safety for the people and international students, especially in the current pandemic how we can help the new students come into the UK.

Questions:

Q: With the current situation, how could you make sure that all International students feel welcome?

A: *Follow advice from the government as what they are saying is based on advice from medical experts. I would try and make them feel welcome and safe by following what has been stated by the government.*

Q: With regards to cultural diversity we have had difficulty in getting members of the international community involved. How would you plan on getting them involved?

A: *Maybe we can encourage them with, for example, free food such as the unique food of each nation, not just free pizza.*

Q: If lockdown was over and everyone can travel, to where would you organise a trip?

A: *I would go to the place that Shaf started to organise and also an EPL game.*

7. Any Other Business

Note from the Chair:

We will run another emergency GM next week probably around the same time to go over the agenda items again to achieve quorum for voting. The position of ISO will be open to both candidates again. If both ISO candidates are able to attend the hust next week we will replay the video of Muhammed's hust and all questions asked to him will be given to Kalel and then voting will

occur. Many thanks to everyone who attended the meeting and I'm sorry it has been so long and we didn't get to pass the proposed motions.

Rebecca Salthouse

GCR Secretary

31/05/2020