

Ustinov College GCR General Meeting

Minutes

2:00 pm, 07/02/21



1. Apologies: *None.*

Present: *Started meeting with 31 in total, dipped to 27, peak of 33.*

2. Question and Answer Session with Glenn McGregor (Ustinov College Principal)

Q: When will livers out be able to come to college to use facilities, e.g. common room/gym/computer room?

A: Once we come out of lockdown, this is likely – around March? Part of a plan of opening up a wider student experience. Any college facilities only available to those living in (any) college; unfortunate that not available to livers out but adhering to national guidance.

Q: Rent payments for students; if students haven't been able to come back for the last year, what is the current plan?

A: Accommodation payment information already circulated amongst student body. Essentially, if not physically living in for Epiphany term (and can be proved, e.g. keys in reception), then will not be charged by Epiphany term. If using/accessing room, then will be charged. Stumbling block is the proving idea.

Q: Will these rooms be accessed? Can students leave belongings etc?

A: Private rooms; will not be used for anything else. These will not be accessed by anybody, unless there is due reason, e.g. water leaks. After Epiphany, will be dependent on government advice as to whether students can return to campus. If government suggests that Easter term is also online-only, then this may be extended. Students are able to return to pick up critical items on a given day, e.g. laptops; this will not be charged.

Q: Is there any other way to prove we haven't physically been there apart from the presence of keys? Other students e.g. international students may have their keys with them.

A: No; no other way to prove that you're not there. Keys are absolute proof and is used by other universities as well. Best way is to get in touch with college and explain the situation; this will be taken from there. Should email Sarah Prescott, or the Ustinov student support team, or Ian McDonald; Ustinov.membership@durham.ac.uk should reach all of these people.

Q: Previous awards from colleges have been printed on cards; now they're on paper. What might happen with trophies as well?

A: Will be looked at once we come out of lockdown; conscious of this.

3. Matters arising from the last minutes

a. Approval of minutes from 04/10/2020 – *passed on the general aye*

b. Election results from the last meeting:

i. Treasurer: Victoria Vasileva

ii. Social Secretary: Sorcha Grant

iii. Communications Officer: Luke Chand

iv. Livers Out Rep: Fausto Dardi

- v. Sheraton Park Rep: Konstantina Votsika
- vi. Formal Secretary: Connie Gallagher
- vii. Ents Officer: Ryan Pointing
- viii. Tech Officer: Bryony Rogers
- ix. Women's Welfare Rep: Alannah McPhee
- x. Eco Rep: Julie Garg
- xi. Female Sports Rep: Diane Austray
- xii. Male Sports Rep: Matt Adams
- xiii. Assistant Treasurer: Laurence Norman

4. Officer Reports:

a. President [DM]

University Matters

- In October I started being part of the SS&WSC (Student Support and Wellbeing Sub-Committee) where we began a review of student support & wellbeing definitions as well as the structure and roles defined by University. The latest include College and University staff and the services that University provides.
- In November I also started being part of the "LFT Mass Testing Communications team", this was to give advice on the communication that University was sending to students, the most pressing issue I was tackling was to remind them about the PGs.
- At JCR PresComm we produced a WSE list of things that we wished to prioritise for the return to student life and was shared with the University.
- At MCR PresComm we worked to have a centralized system for welfare support for all livers-out, and we have had two inter-MCR Pub quizzes where students can meet other PGs.
- University is going to provide body cams to porters, this test was going to start on Term 2, but due to some issues with the connectivity to the internet it has been delayed.
- University has provided for Term 2 security staff on every College from 8 pm to 4 am, as support to porters who are checking that students follow COVID-19 regulations. Despite them helping porters they won't be entering rooms. Also, they will be monitoring the access to the Common Room (pool tables) and the Seminar Room (table tennis).
- University is planning to apply for derogation once the lockdown ends in middle February and is asking the Common Rooms to prepare, if possible, some options for Wider Student Experience face-to-face for Term 3.
- The scheme for refunding accommodation for Term 2 is under consideration for PGs, as some will need to return but are not able. At the moment, if a student doesn't return for Term 2 will not be charged even though there are belongings in the room. If the student returns early the plan is that the student will be charged just for the amount of time has used the room, there are some considerations on prices and how this will be calculated. If an international student has not been able to leave Durham, but wanted to return to their country as soon as possible, they will have to contact College to let them know about their intentions and College will look into not charging the student once has left.
- The Counselling Service is currently at 80% of capacity but they are still asking that people seek support if they needed it.

College Matters

- In October we had some Hatfield students staying at Sheraton Park due to some complications on their building. They were aware of the procedures Ustinov College was implementing and nothing went wrong.
- In November we started having LFT on-site for livers in, with 2 students at Sheraton Park and 1 tutor from Keenan House. The intake was very low and for January College decided to not continue with the scheme.

Exec Matters

- The GCR supported the Halloween event organized by Sheraton Park Residents Association so the kids could have an activity for Halloween.
- In November I sent our letter as part of the "17 letters 4 words" campaign.
- IndyComm is working to get a unified version of the SLA in order to help Van Mildert as they need to submit it to the Charities Commission.
- The SPRA mentioned the behaviour of the Ustinovians and that the local residents are very grateful for their good behaviour and support towards the community.
- With Term 2 being online the GCR has been working to provide as much support and events as possible to all students wherever they are. We hope to welcome Livers out later on the Term and to have some face-to-face activities for Term 3.

b. Finance [VV]

- Current Account: £ 46,960.23
- Savings Account: £ 48,436.10

- Overall, we have been having a very stable financial year due to unfortunate reasons, however. Expenditure has been reduced due to the limited activities we can undertake at the moment, but we have been concentrating our efforts to spend more on prizes and events to improve the wellbeing of our students.
- At present our membership for Tier 1 + Tier 2 is 101, where 11 are Tier 1 and 90 of Tier 2 as of latest figures. With the lack of face-to-face events, membership has not been of great interest to many Ustinovians. Hopefully that is to change soon and allow us to plan more outdoor events for everyone, which have been budgeted for.

c. Vice-President [-] (DM)

- In October the Observatory was under the process of the 5-test check when we had to wait for estates and facilities to fix two issues in order to be able to open it. These two issues were the change of the window glass in the music room and fixing the flooding in the Fisher room and were fixed until early December. After this we applied for another 5-test check and we weren't able to pass it. Therefore, we got to the agreement to have it opened two days a week so we could ensure that it was a COVID-19 secure space. Later the Observatory was open for a trial period in December.
- In November the Common Room at Keenan House was open as a study space for students.
- From November the Common Room at Sheraton Park has been used during the day as a study space with a booking system through College reception.
- In December the Gym was open for a trial period with a time slot for a household and had a cleaning session between each slot. The agreement with University was that the gym was going to operate as a household fitness space

with no charging fee.

- So far in Term 2 we have been able to continue having open the Gym and the Observatory following the same schemes put in place during the trials and following the new changes on University guidelines. In addition, one household can book the use of the pool tables (at the Common Room) or the table tennis (at the Seminar Room) per night. At the moment, all these facilities remain for Livers in as Livers out should not come to the central site.

- In January we added a TV in the Fisher Room at the Observatory, this in order to allow students to watch a movie (DVD player on site) or use our PS2 for Karaoke.

- The allotment will start working and will be available for Livers in and Livers out who want to participate, we are working on a booking system in order to ensure no mixing of households.

d. Clubs & Societies [CV]

- Since the last GM there have been many back and forths regarding college sport. There were some training sessions (mainly outdoors) during the first term. There were plans of competitive games during the Epiphany term but due to the lockdown all sport activities had to stop.

- We have three new societies. More specifically Tennis, Running and Allotment societies!

- Regarding the gym, it opened for a trial period in December and it's open again during the Epiphany term. This is only for livers-in at the moment and after the latest university guidelines, you'll need a negative test result in the last 24 hours to get access in the gym.

- Ustinov College also have their own sport stash by PlayerLayer. The designs have been finalised thanks to your voting after the last GM (colours are black and purple) and soon the website should be online and ready for orders.

e. Welfare [JB]

- Your Welfare Committee have been working hard on various campaigns since the previous GM. Various members have offered virtual contact hours for any support-related queries or just chats. Constantina, the Sheraton Park rep ran a Road Safety Awareness campaign alongside the college support staff, and also assisted with the provision of LFT training in the bar during Michaelmas. The women's rep, Alannah, successfully ran a breast cancer awareness campaign in the autumn with resources from Coppafeel. Alongside the ISO, Muhammed, we submitted a letter to Durham University for the 17 Letters, 4 Words campaign in collaboration with DPOCA, as a call to action for a racism-free Durham. See the ISO and Livers Out reports for more of what they have been up to since the previous GM. I'd like to say a huge thank you to all of the Welfare Committee for their help and support during these out-of-the-ordinary terms.

- We are currently working on a discreet provision of welfare supplies (e.g. contraception, menstrual products, pregnancy tests) for livers in and livers out with minimal risk. Hopefully by Sunday I'll be able to share more details on this. This February is LGBT+ History Month and we are working on a variety of events to celebrate, and a calendar will hopefully also be available by Sunday.

- A new subgroup of the Sexual Misconduct & Violence Operations Group has been formed consisting of myself, Diana (President), Sarah Prescott, and other staff. We will meet monthly to discuss the various reasons for low reporting of such issues among postgraduates at Durham. I have been regularly meeting with Ewan Swift and other common room officers to talk about support-related

matters for Durham students and pool ideas.

- Otherwise, I hope you are all doing as well as possible in the circumstances. Take care and please get in touch if you feel like you need anything.

f. Bar [-] (DM)

Bar staff were paid for their shifts in November as they were already scheduled to work despite that the bar had to close due to the changes in the government guidelines.

- In December following consultation with Public Health England, the Common Room social space was repurposed for use by multiple households for organised and pre-arranged social events provided the events were supervised. The University further stated that bar staff who were familiar with operating these spaces in a Covid-19 compliant manner can be paid to perform this supervisory duty.

- For Term 2 bar staff would be able to help us to maintain a COVID-19 secure space while we are hosting events in the case of using the three spaces at Sheraton Park (Common Room, Seminar Room and Community Room). University is also hiring them to perform the Lateral Flow Test in the central venues.

- The University is checking the rule for bar staff casual in terms of furloughing. However, the DSU has started an initiative to get more feedback from them. This information has been shared with the bar staff.

g. Communications [LC]

- General communications strategy involved working closely with all committees to advertise social and relevant information on our social media platforms. Since a lot of the student aren't currently in Durham, the online platforms took precedent over any physical advertising. Typically for a social event, it would involve posting on the Facebook Ustinov group page, as well as more directly through Whatsapp and WeChat - on these two platforms we have a large number of students in group chats whom we can contact directly and will receive notifications (if turned on) so that events and information are easily seen. Twitter and Instagram would be used for more general notices and important information regarding college or for agendas pushed by other members of the committee. For larger social events, such as Ustinov Live and some lockdown events, specific facebook events pages were made and advertised in order to attract more attention. Email was used for large events and social calendars and was advertised through the Comms account as this has access to the entire student mailing list - this targets all students at Ustinov and not just those who follow our social media platforms.

- Since the Comms team is small this year, I have also been performing the role of Press Secretary and writing the Weekly GCR Newsletter. This involves communicating with both the exec team and the general committee for any news or agendas they wish to include. News is received throughout the week and the newsletter is sent out on Wednesday Lunchtime - this worked well as the college newsletter is sent out on Fridays and gives students a chance to see upcoming events for the weekend. Typically, the newsletter covers events for the week, upcoming social matter and formals, picture of the week submissions, winners from competitions taking place, general college news or student union matters, and also events from our committees such as welfare and livers out. The newsletter reaches all the students at Ustinov so as a weekly feature it is an excellent platform for getting information to the student body.

Q: Question to both social and comms officers: Attendance on events doesn't seem

to have been very high lately, how are you planning to advertise them more (and earlier in advance) or else bring in more attendees?

A: Maybe get the event out earlier; it's in newsletter, facebook, whatsapp, wechat already etc. Putting it out in advance; maybe not that helpful. Perhaps be more clear when events are starting in half an hour to allow spontaneous events. A lot of the events this term have poor engagement; welcome to new ideas.

h. DSU [-] (DM)

- In the Assembly session in October the two items passed on the voting; change to the standing order D (Assemblies online) and SU Equality & Diversity amendment. Also, it was raised that there were no student trustees appointed after February.
- Democracy Survey was aimed to help DSU redesign how it operates, and by filling a survey the students were able to share their insight into what they look for in a student union. Participation from Ustinov College was 0.9%.
- Culture Commission provided the opportunity for any student to anonymously discuss what Durham culture meant to them and the contribution sessions were for students that were keen to continue the conversation and had more themes and issues they wanted to raise.
- In the Assembly session in November the five items passed on the voting; The future of education under Covid-19: SU Core Position, Housing and Accommodation through COVID-19: SU Core Position, Wider Student Experience through COVID-19: SU Core Position, Cut the Rent and Motion to condemn the actions of the Durham Union Society. Also, there were 3 nominations for chair, however, 2 stepped down and the remaining candidate was not eligible; the only vote that passed was for the newest member of the Governance and Grants Committee.
- During Term 2 DSU Reps have been working on how to support students about the safety net policy that Russell group has rejected. And the DSU has a joint letter with Mary Foy to PBSAs asking for a compassionate refund for students who have not returned to their accommodation.
- The SU will be revealing candidates on its website and social media channels w/c 15th Feb.
- However, there is no start date of campaigning in their election rules so candidates can start campaigning whenever they like. Key date: 17th Feb is the Officer 'meet the candidate' hustings event (link coming soon on their website). All students will be able to attend.
- In the Assembly held on February 4th, 3 items passed on the voting; SU Freedom of Speech Policy, End of advertising of unaffordable housing and Membership of Assembly should be publicly known. The Intersectionality week item was rolled over to the next Assembly. We start the discussion about some issues about the clarifications made on the Democracy review with regards to the Re-Open Nominations role in the elections and the possibility for any student to apply to be the person in charge for campaign for RON.

i. International Officer [MZ]

- Another national lockdown has closed the curtain for us to organise day trips. However, we have had a very wonderful way to celebrate together especially the international festives. For example, we had a very welcoming numbers of participation in Diwali celebration. Added to that, we also had Online Burns Night Formal which also achieved our objective to get together.
- We are planning to do another get together virtually for this upcoming Lunar new year celebration. We are very hopeful that this celebration will entertains

everyone especially during the lockdown.

j. Livers Out Rep [FD]

- Since I took over last October, I have been working mainly on the social and welfare sides of my role. As part of the Social Committee, I have been promoting events to livers out, involving them in most of the activities we have run, supporting them via email, and answering all their doubts. Sometimes, I have gone the extra mile and have delivered food, drinks and presents to their doors for the formals and the Secret Santa event, which, by the way, is something I have enjoyed a lot. On the Welfare Committee side, I have been in charge of the "Take Time to Sign" campaign and have periodically posted on the Facebook Ustinov Livers Out group promoting events or pinpointing certain activities or situations that we thought might have had an impact on livers out. Besides all these things, my future efforts will be also devoted to allowing livers out to gradually get access to the college facilities, even though that will mainly depend on the government's restrictions.

k. Social [SG]

- This term we have launched the epiphany social calendar that includes weekly movie nights, quiz nights and games nights.
- This term's calendar is completely online. This is different to last term where we were able to run the quiz and bingo nights in person. We are hoping to move things back to taking place in the bar next term, dependent on government regulations.
- We have run 2 online formals - Bonfire Night and Burns Night.
- Our future plans include a jazz night where we will invite a professional jazz musician to play over zoom. It would also include a possible cheese and wine element that would run in a very similar format to the online formals.
- We are also in the process of developing a summer events schedule that may include outdoor events, including that of a socially distanced summer BBQ, again dependent on governmental regulations.
- Please do get in contact with any suggestions for social activities!

5. Agenda Items:

a. Motion to amend the names/roles of male/female sports rep

- The two GCR roles on the Clubs & Societies Committee with the C&S Officer are the male and female sports representatives. So far I don't think there has been a situation (related to our clubs and societies) that needs to be treated based on the gender of the person inquiring. Instead the two areas the C&S committee focuses on during the year are the gym and of course the clubs and societies. Based on that our proposal is to rename the male and female sports representative roles to "Sports Representative" and "Gym Representative". The "Sports Representative" will be sitting in the Clubs & Societies Committee while the "Gym Representative" will be sitting in the Clubs and Societies Committee and the Facilities Committee. We suggest if this motion passes that the names of the two roles are to be changed in our Standing Orders in September (when the positions are open again).

Proposal: To rename the roles of "Male sports rep" and "female sports rep" into "Sports rep" and "Gym rep". Thus to make the following changes to the Standing Orders once the positions are open to run again.

1. Edit section 4.4a) [description of facilities committee] which reads “*The committee shall consist of: Vice-President...*” to include the Gym Rep
2. Edit section 4.7a) [description of Clubs & Socs Committee] which reads “*The committee shall consist of: Clubs and Societies Officer...*” replacing “*two Sports Reps*” with “*Sports Rep, Gym Rep*”
3. Edit section 11.1.2a) [election schedules] by replacing “*Male Sports Rep*”, “*Female Sports Rep*” with “*Sports Rep*”, “*Gym Rep*”
4. Edit section 11.3.7.1 [current description of sports reps] to:

11.3.7.1 Sports Representatives

- a) Coordinate all sports activities.*
- b) Raise sports-related matters, such as issues or concerns of individual GCR members or GCR-affiliated sports clubs and societies with the GCR committee.*
- c) Attend Team Durham meetings if the Clubs & Societies Officer is unable to, in order to represent the views and interests of Ustinov GCR and its sports clubs and societies.*
- d) Liaise with the Bar Steward, Social Secretary and Video Master regarding the timetable for showing world sporting events.*
- e) Work to promote the objects of the GCR as set out in the Constitution.*
- f) Sit on the following committees: GCR Committee, Clubs and Societies Committee.*

5. Create section 11.3.5.5 [new description of gym rep]:

11.3.5.5 Gym Representative

- a) Coordinate gym related activities*
- b) Organise and carry out gym inductions, gym membership and recruit volunteers to assist with inductions.*
- c) Raise gym-related matters, such as buying/fixing gym equipment or any other issues that are related to the gym*
- e) Work to promote the objects of the GCR as set out in the Constitution.*
- f) Sit on the following committees: GCR Committee, Clubs and Societies Committee, Facilities Committee*

6. And to rename the roles anywhere else they are mentioned in the Standing Orders

Proposer: Christos Vlahos

Secunder: Vera Bieber

Q: Is this a permanent change, i.e. beyond coronavirus?

A: This change has no relevance to the current situation; should be permanent. The roles of the committee members help with this anyway; it's just to make it clearer.

Q: If these are for the sports and gyms, would there be scope for, e.g “Societies Officer”?

A: There's not a massive amount of non-sport societies, and they don't need much oversight – any problems can be dealt with by the Clubs and Societies officer. The committee as a whole is responsible for dealing with all of clubs and societies – not

just for the sports!

Vote: passes with all in favour, 1 abstention.

b. Nomination of Alexander Blair for Honorary Life Membership

- There are a few students whose actions lead to significant positive change for the College and its community that lasts well beyond their time at Ustinov. Often these people work behind the scenes, and so whilst Ustinovians benefit from their hard work, they are not given the credit they deserve. I believe it is time for this to change for a prime example of such a person; that is why I nominate Alexander Blair for an HLM.

- Alexander began his time on the GCR truly thrown in at the deep end. His first duty as Secretary in 2016-2017 was minuting one of the most significant meetings in the history of the GCR, regarding the sudden announcement that Ustinov was being forced to move location. His minutes throughout the year discussing the move, including that very first meeting, became essential pieces of evidence that allowed the GCR to force the university to keep promises they made and later 'forgot about'. Without Alexander's hard work and attention to detail during that year, it is likely we would have lost out on some of the facilities that currently exist here at Sheraton Park. Furthermore, during his time as Secretary, Alexander reorganised the Exec meetings to stream-line them and reorganised the minutes so that it was easier to make sure small but important things did not slip by without being dealt with appropriately. I cannot imagine the number of things our students have benefited from over the last few years that could very easily have 'slipped through the cracks' had the simple but effective changes headed by Alexander not been implemented.

- Alexander continued as a member of Exec in 2017-2018 as Treasurer, inheriting an unorganised mess from the year or two before. Once again, Alexander made extremely effective changes to various aspects of the GCR related to finance and money handling. He reorganised the way that the GCR plans and budgets for large scale expenses, leading to helpful guidelines for future Exec to follow and helped streamline General Meetings saving everyone a lot of time.

- His commitment to improving the experience of the Ustinov community continued beyond his time on Exec. In 2019-2020, Alexander was one of the Quiz Masters, and thanks to him the pub quiz was able to transition quickly and seamlessly to an online platform last year. Beyond that, even when Alexander was not part of the committee, he continued to give up his time to help, provide insight and give advice to future committees, and attend General meetings to stand up for what he believed was best for the Ustinov students.

- I have undoubtedly missed many of Alexander's contributions. His due diligence pushed the GCR to higher standards and he contributed to policies that have had significant positive impact on the wider Ustinov community. He has repeatedly and selflessly given his time to improving Ustinov College for its students often behind the scenes, and that is why I ask you to vote to give Alexander Blair an honorary lifetime membership of the GCR.

Proposer: Alastair Stewart

Seconder: Brad Din

Vote passes unaminously.

6. Hustings

a. **Vice-President**

Candidate: Dafni Chorattidou

Manifesto:

The current Covid situation has been hard on all of us, and a disproportionately large burden was placed on the GCR committee. I aim to help out with all of that by running for VP, and hopefully contribute to all social and executive activities for all Ustinovians.

I personally chose Durham because of the college experience and so far, due to the pandemic, I have not experienced nearly as much as I thought I would have. I would like to make Ustinov a more active college, and help organise more events, contribute to overall GCR work and put Ustinov back on the map (frankly because I am tired of all the Durfess posts forgetting we exist).

I believe I would be a good candidate because I thrive under pressure, I can organise my time well and since the VP is expected to fill in positions that do not get filled, it will not be easy. Nonetheless, I am confident I am up to the challenge. In my high school, we had a system similar to colleges (also similar to Harry Potter Houses) where I led a House for an entire year, organising social/fundraising events and representing the House and its students at school board and student government meetings, and thus have experience in a similar position. Moreover, I am well-versed in Discord and zealous enough to organise game nights 2 nights a week.

I hope you will consider voting for me and a better Ustinov. Thank you!

Hust:

Hello all, I'm Dafne from Cyprus and studying IR. COVID-times have been hard, and there is lots of burden on GCR committee. I hope to help out by running for VP. I chose Durham for the college experience – not experienced as much as expected and I would like to help with this. I am to help to make Ustinov more active vt contributing to all work involved, and put Ustinov back on the map. VP has to fill in assorted roles; I'm sure it'll be a lot of work and won't be easy but should be easily managed. Previous house system experience in running large committees.

Questions:

Q: Do you live in college and/or are you familiar with the college facilities (since the vice president is responsible for the facilities)?

A: Lived in college before lockdown, been stranded in Cyprus since. But yes, familiar with the facilities.

Q: Mentioned games night; what would you do, how would you run them? How would you boost engagement?

A: Haven't considered all the details yet, but personally have two bots in Discord server that help with Mafia/Werewolf games e.g. Haven't considered engagement aspect yet.

Q: Follow up on not living in college – are you willing to communicate with people in college/Durham about accessing the facilities to make sure they get attendance.

A: Absolutely.

Q: Since you'll need to be a trustee – have you been under investigation for criminal offence? Have you ever been declared bankrupt?

A: No and no.

7. Any other Business

- a. *Q: More difficult times ahead when new exec arrives during summer, AGM etc. This year will be particularly difficult; might be difficult to encourage people. Have you*

had any thoughts about how you might go about this?

A: Already been discussed; trying to make a list of potential candidates. Might be worth speaking to college to get some kind of commitment to advertise committee positions.

b. *Q: Will anything be done to fix the vending machine?*

A: Tried to fix it, but unfortunately the piece is difficult to find since our machine is old. However, working with Selecta to get a new machine, which has credit card. At the moment, they only work 2 days, 4 hours each day. However, in plans!

Brad Din

GCR Secretary

07/02/2021