



Submission To	Postgraduate Council
Meeting Date	26 April 2021
Category	Select: Confidential or Non-Confidential
Authors	Diana Zhang, Ramanashree Palakshamurthy & Jerry Offor
Item No	[Governance use only]

Minutes

PGC Council Emergency Meeting

April 26th, 2021, 6:03 – 7:43pm (AEST)

Law G02 & Zoom online

Members in Attendance (on time)

Jerry Offor, Diana Zhang, Ramanashree Palakshamurthy, Simon Xu, Emilia Nwakpa, Swarali Marathe, Hugo Su, Cathy Deng, Min Huang, Jing Sun, Chukwuka Madumelu, Saurabh Kaura, Constantine Tsounis, Mariam Soomro, Liam Cheney, Dimple Lalwani, Saltanat Paritova

Ex-Officio Members: Shruthi Shankar

Committee Members: Anita Trinh, Sardor Bakhtiyorov, Shuang Song, Vishnu Nair, Aria Wang, Yiwen Li, James Cheng

Guest: Toyin Abdulsalam (Academic Board HDR Representative)

Members in attendance (after meeting opened)

6:08 – Sahana Nandakumar (Arc)

6:11 – Joshua Karras, Kalyani Patil

6:24 – Christine Castor

Members absent without apologies: Niharika Kodare, Vintii Aggrawal

Apologies: Emmy Lau, Rabia Mobeen (sent after meeting due to network shutdown in Pakistan)

1. Meeting Opening

The President (Jerry) welcomed all members who attended in person and via Zoom to the April PGC Council Meeting. The meeting was declared open at 6:03pm.

- 1.1 An Acknowledgement of country was made
- 1.2 An apology was received by Councillor, Emmy Lau
- 1.3 No conflict of interest was declared.
- 1.4 The adoption of the minutes from the March PGC meeting was open to the floor.



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RESOLVED THAT the motion to accept the minutes was raised by Womens' Officer, Saltanat and seconded by Research Students' Officer, Constantine.

1.5

- 1.5.1 One item was flagged by President, Jerry for immediate discussion concerning recent changes to PGC members.
 - 1.5.1.1 Councillor, Dimple took to the floor and announced that she will not be able to continue in her role due to workload and academic issues. She expressed her desire to give her Councillor position to someone else who can fulfil the responsibilities and concluded by thanking PGC for the opportunity. Jerry thanked Dimple for her time and efforts and noted that he has received her resignation letter. Jerry also clarified that Dimple's position will be open to the public soon and PGC elected members will vote internally.
 - 1.5.1.2 President, Jerry then notified the floor that Coursework Officer, Niharika (who is absent in the meeting) has also sent her letter of resignation. He recited her resignation letter and highlighted the challenges which Niharika had faced in trying to work offshore (e.g. time zone differences) as well as various health issues that she had to endure. Jerry emphasised her conviction to resign came from the fact that she did not feel she was doing anything concrete whilst still taking PGC honorarium. Though she had tried her best to make a level contribution, she expressed her desire to give her shared position to someone else who will dutifully carry out the responsibilities. Jerry thanked Niharika's contributions and clarified that Coursework Officer, Simon is now the sole Coursework officer. However, Simon can request the Council to look for someone else to share that position with him.
- 1.5.2 Three items were flagged by Councillor, Saurabh for immediate discussion including i) weekly podcast collaborations; ii) report card for academic board representatives and iii) monthly meetings with faculty board representatives and academic board representatives.
 - 1.5.2.1 The first item concerns the upcoming PGC weekly podcast (from second week of May). Saurabh relayed that there have been discussions to partner with Public Speaking Society due to similar goals and visions surrounding the objectives of the podcast. Discussions surrounding potential collaborations was moved to the floor. President, Jerry clarified that the podcast will be led by Saurabh and supervised by the Vice-President's Office, and the interest to collaborate with other societies will start with Public Speaking Society.
 - 1.5.2.1.1 Questions were received surrounding the logistics of the podcast and what Public Speaking Society and/or other societies would



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bring to the table. Saurabh clarified that the purpose of the podcast is to bring postgraduate students into discussion about various subject matters and provides platform to discuss ideas, broaden horizon of knowledge and improve analytical thinking. Discussions will feature subject matter experts from academia/industry and having collaborations will ensure wider reach of audience given shared interests

- 1.5.2.1.2 Jerry noted that according to the Charter, Councillors are not supposed to spearhead projects unless the person in question feels that they can handle it. He confirmed that Saurabh is willing to hold it and will not affect his studies.
- 1.5.2.1.3 No objections about potential collaborations were made.
- 1.5.2.2 The second item concerns promotion of report cards written by Academic Board representatives which showcases the work that they have done and will do in future. These will soon be released to the public for people to read and ask questions over a LIVE Q & A session. Discussion surrounding how to implement this and over what platform was raised to the floor.
 - 1.5.2.2.1 President, Jerry noted that the Academic Board is not structured like PGC where students know who is representing them. He highlighted that an upcoming PGC Town Hall meeting will be a good opportunity for students to attend and ask questions.
 - 1.5.2.2.2 Research Officer, Constantine (and UNSW Council member) noted that while the principle of having a transparent system such as report cards is good and while PGC is a good platform, he emphasised that there needs to be buy in from other Academic Board members. He noted that similar to how PGC is bringing all student voices together, these report cards should also bring contributions from all Academic Board representatives together. This will make the outreach more impactful.
- 1.5.2.3 The third item concerns initiating monthly meetings with faculty board representatives and Academic Board representatives. These meetings would be up to 2 hours long and any issues discussed will then be brought to PGC (via the ex-officio members who are on Academic Board). Concurrently, there needs to be defined roles and responsibilities for Academic Board representatives in the PGC charter. Discussion about the implementation of this in PGC Charter was raised to the floor.
- 1.5.2.3.1 Vice-President, Ramana suggested to lay out the responsibilities before deciding as understanding the overarching structure is important. This may require speaking with Arc stakeholder to determine the structure.



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- 1.5.2.3.2 Similarly, Research Officer, Constantine commented that as a former Engineering faculty board member, there is no training resources for these representatives. Thus, it would be difficult to mandate to ensure sustainability. However, PGC would be a good middle ground and so it would be more effective long-term if PGC members can liaise with faculty members such that it would be PGC's responsibility as opposed to Academic Board's responsibility. Simultaneously, we should advocate for better induction processes for faculty board representatives.
- 1.5.2.3.3 Jerry emphasised that PGC's main body is Arc and that while it is a good idea, there shouldn't be an overlap of student bodies (e.g. PGC is also on Academic Board). Therefore, he suggested that PGC Charter Committee should sit with Arc to figure out how to get it legislated in the PGC Charter (e.g. have Coursework Officer liaise with Academic Board and faculty board representatives). Finally, Jerry invited any member who wishes to discuss PGC long-term strategy to join the meeting on May 13th with Arc CEO and to notify the Vice-President's Office if interested.
- 1.5.3 Vice-President, Ramana raised an emergency item for discussion concerning a potential PGC hosted fundraiser event to support the current COVID-19 situation in India.
- 1.5.3.1 Vice-President, Diana welcomed such an idea, however she suggested that we should identify suitable charity organisations to support.
- 1.5.3.2 President, Jerry suggested for Ramana to research which organisations would be suitable and to also speak to Arc Executives about logistics.

- 1.6 Womens' Officer, Saltanat volunteered to be the meeting observer.

2. Matters for Decision

- 2.1 President, Jerry thanked all PGC members who contributed to the creation of a Paddington Campus Office Bearer to PGC Charter. A discussion on the paper presented was raised to the floor.
- 2.1.1 Questions were raised concerning the electorate and eligibility conditions were raised. Jerry clarified that only postgraduates whose primary course/controlling school is based at Paddington campus are allowed to vote and that the Officer must attend > 70 % of classes at Paddington.
- 2.1.2 Jerry also noted that similar discussions to include a Canberra Campus Office Bearer are still in progress.
- 2.1.3 No further additions were suggested.



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RESOLVED that as **Recommendation to Board** Agenda Item 2.1 on the addition of a Paddington Campus Office Bearer should be added to PGC Charter and Arc regulation .

3. Matters for Discussion

- 3.1 N/A
- 3.2 Women's Officer, Saltanat gave an update on the Tell Me Your Story and Culture event. She noted that in consultation with Arc Marketing, the event is now rebranded to Tell Me Your Story. A Facebook and Eventbrite page have been created. A total of 28 unique stories were submitted (not included those from PGC members). A shortlist of 20 stories will be presented on May 14th in Law Theatre. She asked everyone to please spread the word, to attend and bring a friend as there will only be 100 tickets available. Saltanat also explained that there will be an e-book that will be published and so anyone who wishes to contribute should let her know.
 - 3.2.1 Questions were raised about whether PGC should offer a gift or certificate to each applicant. President, Jerry clarified that all stories will be featured in the e-book and that these suggestions will be discussed by the relevant Committee. He also mentioned that there will be cultural dances on the night (e.g. Indian, African dance)
- 3.3 Research Officer, Constantine noted that the Research Students and Supervisor Awards is being planned for October and more details will follow.
- 3.4 Councillor, Saurabh raised 3 suggestions for Charter changes:
 - 3.4.1 The first concerns greater accountability for Councillors similar to how it is laid out for Office Bearers. Therefore, he recommends that all Councillors should complete monthly reports and that the argument for not doing so due to not being paid a honorarium is not sufficient as they would already be aware of that fact.
 - 3.4.2 Secondly, that the President should be able to nominate any PGC member to attend on his behalf in meetings with key stakeholders. They should then bring back discussions to PGC meetings and to the President.
 - 3.4.3 Thirdly, to ensure that PGC ex-officio members should have the same voting rights as other ex-officio members (e.g. SRC President). He noted that these ex-officio members historically do not attend PGC meetings whereas current ex-officio members (Academic Board representatives) do.
 - 3.4.4 President, Jerry noted that the responsibilities for Councillors are implicated in the PGC Charter. However, it has historically been difficult to implement owing to the use of the word 'shall'. However, he agreed that Councillors should be held accountable and suggested for the PGC Charter Committee to look into implementing aforementioned changes. No other comments were made.



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RESOLVED THAT PGC Charter Committee will look into this further.

- 3.5 Vice-President, Diana informed everyone that current submissions for PGC Ambassador of the Month have been received primarily from male applicants, and so the past 3 winners have all been male. Therefore, she recommended that in order to increase diversity of the awards and to ensure greater female representation, the next one should be PGC Female Ambassador of the Month. Discussions on this were raised to the floor.
- 3.5.1 Comments were raised including promoting other less-represented communities, potential to rephrase the award, and selection based on merit (as opposed to gender). Diana clarified that this special award for female-identifying postgraduates is for one month only and that promoting diversity is important.
- RESOLVED THAT the committee in charge of these awards (President, VP and Coursework Office) will look into these changes.
- 3.6 Councillor, Liam explained that there is a disparity between the work done by Office Bearers and that of Councillors and that there is currently no compensation for the work of Councillors. He argued that there should be renumeration for Councillors considering that the current work output of some Councillors is similar, if not more than Office Bearers. However, he noted that there should be expectations laid out for renumeration. Discussions on implementing Councillor renumeration was raised to the floor.
- 3.6.1 The response was favourable. There were some questions raised such as need to lay out clear responsibilities, submission of report, potential of having a lead Councillor to oversee work as well as how this would be implemented financially (e.g. take money from Office Bearer's honorarium). President, Jerry recommended for this discussion to be held in the Strategy Meeting with Arc CEO.
- 3.6.2 Chair of the Arc Board, Sahana raised that the CEO cannot make decisions and that this recommendation would need to first go through Arc Subcommittees and reviewed in parallel with SRC Councillor positions. Thus, she noted that the first step is to take it up to Arc Board before the logistics can then be discussed.
- 3.7 Vice-President, Diana gave a brief overview about the plans for Postgraduate Week and referred everyone to the draft schedule of events which was made in consultation with Arc stakeholders. Discussions about these events were raised to the floor.
- 3.7.1 Questions were raised concerning participation from offshore postgraduates and potential clashes with Arc events. Diana clarified that virtual events to allow participation from offshore postgraduates will be kept in mind. In addition, the schedule will be shared with Arc Global Calendar to avoid another clash from happening. President, Jerry recommended for the Vice-President's Office to



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delegate events to respective Officers. Diana suggested that if anyone has a particular preference for holding an event, to please email VP's Office.

- 3.8 President, Jerry emphasised the need to submit reports on time to the VP's Office and to respond dutifully to any email communications.
- 3.9 President, Jerry clarified that Councillors should hold Office Bearers accountable. As such, Councillors, Min and Hugo have been tasked to review the performance of selected offices
 - 3.9.1 Min presented the activities by the President, Vice-President, and Research Office. For the P & VP's Office, Min noted the wealth of activities including O-week activities, chairing Board meetings, overall planning and execution of events, establishing networks with associations, setting up Committee program, renovating PGC lounge, LIVE campus tours, meetings with DVC Academic and others. She noted the success of many of these events and referred everyone to read more in their submitted reports. For the Research Office, Min noted the successful entrepreneurship event which was well-attended and beneficial, establishment of OzHarvest collaborations and meetings with UNSW stakeholders (e.g. DVC Academic).
 - 3.9.2 Hugo presented the activities of the Coursework and ISO Office. Hugo noted their efforts in the Salvation Army Appeal (which was held in collaboration with other PGC Officers), Strike Bowling event (which was sold out very quickly) and networking events. He noted that all these events have been very popular amongst students and have been very engaging.
 - 3.9.3 President, Jerry noted that an achievement report from each Office will need to be completed and uploaded online as discussed previously. He also recommended for Councillors, Saurabh to review the Equity and Women's Office and for Cathy to review the Event's Office.
- 3.10 Women's Officer, Saltanat presented PGC's financial performance to date. She noted that two of the biggest events included the Researcher's introduction to entrepreneurship and Monet with Friends. She highlighted the extraordinary number of events held in February and March and that ticket sales through Eventbrite has raised \$765. As a result, PGC is currently operating at a 8 % surplus. Upcoming expenses to be noted for April include the Leadership event and for Term 2, Postgrad week. She noted that the upcoming Tell Me Your Story event is generously funded by UNSW EDI (\$2500). Saltanat also noted that PGC can do more with the budget by selling ticketed events. She will also work with Arc to see how to reduce budget spending.
- 3.11 Equity Officer, Chuka prefaced by saying that his proposal is not targeted at anyone in PGC. He noted how challenging the duties and responsibilities are for onshore PGC members, let alone for offshore postgraduates (see Niharika's resignation). Given the COVID-19 climate, he recommended a maximum number of months allowed for offshore postgraduates and to relinquish their position



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otherwise. While this would not take into effect on current members, it is important to consider for posterity's sake. Discussions about this were raised to the floor.

3.11.1 Concerns were raised regarding how it is difficult for offshore postgraduates as some things are out of their control (e.g. travel exemptions) and that there should be special consideration in these circumstances, as well as how offshore postgraduates should not be expected to have the same responsibilities as onshore postgraduates. Suggestions were also raised about adding dedicated responsibilities for Offshore postgraduates in the PGC Charter. It was also noted that as some meetings are not always in-person, offshore postgraduates can still work well.

RESOLVED THAT the PGC Charter Committee will look into it further.

4. Other Business

4.1 Research Officer, Mariam presented the findings from the PGC survey. In summary, 243 responses were received with a good mix of international domestic responses. A majority of responses were from HDR students primarily due to the distribution of the survey by GRS. Postgraduates were interested to have regular (monthly) events and many were mentally affected by COVID-19. Most postgraduates asked for more professional development, networking and industry-related events. Mariam requested everyone to have a deeper look at the responses.

RESOLVED THAT a copy of the survey results will be distributed and everyone should read the responses more carefully.

5. Q and A

President, Jerry urged everyone to read the PGC Charter well and to suggest any further changes. He also noted that the next meeting is on May 31 (Monday) and that as discussed, all PGC and PGC Committee members are expected to attend the Tell Me Your Story event and to bring a friend.

6. Meeting Finalisation

6.1 Women's Officer, Saltanat commented that the meeting was efficient and congratulated everyone on sticking better to time.

The President, Jerry thanked everyone for attending the Council meeting. The meeting closed at 7:43pm.