

## Meeting 09/2018

A meeting of the **Monash Postgraduate Association (MPA) Executive Committee** was held from 11:00am to 1:30pm on Monday, 15 October 2018 in the MPA Boardroom, Postgraduate lounge, C2, Caulfield campus.

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## MINUTES

### Meeting opened at 11:10am

#### 1. Formal matters

##### 1.1 Acknowledgement of country

*We the MPAEC acknowledge and pay respect to the people of the Kulin nations as the original and ongoing owners and custodians of this land.*

##### 1.2 Attendance

Apologies: Dorothy Mak, Robyn Oxley

Present: Avinash Dahre, Jeane Freer (via teleconference), Roham Hosseini, Eniola Ibraheem(Chair), Belle Lim, Karan Mehta, Bec O'Connor, Robyn Oxley (via teleconference from 5.4.2), Roy Rozario, Devendra Singh, Ash Solanki, Chloe Tang, Roby Vota, Emily Xue, Philip Zheng (left at 4.2.2, prior to vote)

In Attendance: Janice Boey, Jenny Reeder, Jessica Van Gent

Presenters: Claire Nicholls, PhD Education (via teleconference)

Future leave requests: The committee noted Ash's absence from Australia from late October to Early February. As it was likely she would teleconference into the meetings in November and December, her application for leave was withdrawn and her apologies were noted in the instance she was unable to connect.

##### 1.3 Consideration of the agenda

The following item was added to the agenda:

4.2.3 CAPA ACM 2018- Eni

#### 2. Minutes and Action sheet

##### 2.1 Minutes of MPAEC September meeting 08/18 for confirmation

It is moved:

*That the minutes of the September MPAEC meeting 08/2018 be confirmed.*

Moved: Devendra Singh

Seconded: Karan Mehta

Carried.

## **2.2 Action sheet**

Noted.

## **3. Reports**

### **3.1 President's report**

Eni spoke to his report and highlighted some of his achievements over the past month which included: his meeting with Neville Hiscock regarding charges on University completion letters; discussions with the CISA president and treasurer about their current financial situation; and working with the MPA advocates regarding the Masters of Social Work students' placement issues.

### **3.2 Office-bearer reports**

*Bec O'Connor, Clayton Campus representative*

Bec encouraged the committee to attend the upcoming Clayton Wine and Nibbles evening on Friday 18 October.

*Devendra Singh, General Representative*

Dev thanked everyone on the MPAEC who attended the Fares Fair campaign events over the past week. He said the balloon days had been well attended on Caulfield, however inclement weather on Clayton meant there was lower engagement than the subcommittee had hoped for. He also noted that he had met with Eni to discuss the MPA's future Fares Fair campaigning.

*Jeane Freer, Peninsula Campus representative*

Jeane noted that her month had been very busy with other commitments, but that she had plans to look over the Partnership for Student Mental Health notes and provide feedback to the committee. She also expressed her hope that the MPA's 2019 budget would include significant funding for mental health initiatives.

*Ash Solanki, Women's Officer*

Ash added to her report that she had been working with the Anxiety Recovery Centre Victoria. She requested that the MPA advertise the centre to postgraduates via the fortnightly newsletter. Ash to provide further details to Jan for publishing.

### **3.3 Staff report**

Noted. The committee thanked all the MPA staff who were involved in the coordination of a couple of large events over the past month including the Thesis Writing Bootcamp and the Fares Fair campaign, in particular Jan, Sandra, Caroline and Rhian.

### **3.4 Financial report**

Noted.

### **3.5 Reports to university committees**

The committee agreed that "Reports to University committees" be added as a standing item to the MPAEC monthly agenda. This item would provide an opportunity for the committee to note the various reports tabled by MPA representatives at the major university committees, such as GRC (Graduate Research Committee), LTC (Learning and Teaching Committee) and the SEC (Student Experience Committee).

### **3.6 MPAEC meeting attendance records**

Noted.

## **4. Business**

### **4.1 Business arising**

#### **4.1.1 Off-campus OB position**

Bec spoke to the creation of an Off campus/distance education Office Bearer (OB) Position on the MPAEC. The position would be an internal appointment from within the elected general representatives of the committee. A concern was raised that the appointee to this position may find it difficult to contact the students from within their representative cohort.

Claire Nicholls, an Education PhD student, gave a first-hand account of studying via distance education. Claire told the committee she lived in rural Queensland. Claire spoke of the difficulties created by distance and the isolation she had experienced. Claire suggested that the MPA could reach out to students like herself via social media, and work with MGRO to make MyDevelopment courses more accessible to those off-campus.

Following consideration by the committee, it was moved:

*That the position of a Distance Education/Off-campus Officer be ratified.*

Moved: Roby Vota

Seconded: Bec O'Connor

Abstentions: 1

Carried.

The position is set to be co-opted at the November MPAEC meeting and will be added to the constitution at the 2019 AGM.

#### **4.1.2 CISA Finances**

Belle explained that currently the majority of CISA's income came from Government grants and private sponsorship of their annual conference. They also received a small income from their constituents' affiliation fees. She noted that there were a few other CISA sponsorships. These sponsorships are overseen by the CISA Sustainability Taskforce to ensure ongoing private income streams. CISA has engaged an auditor for their 2017/18 financial year. The committee agreed they would give CISA time to complete their audit reports, and review them when they become available or follow-up with CISA on their status in December.

Belle also added that in her role as CISA's Women's Officer she had successfully received a \$30,000 grant from the state government to run an International Women's Workshop/conference in Victoria in March 2019.

#### **4.1.3 Fares Fair campaign**

Devendra again thanked the committee and staff for their assistance in running the Fares Fair campaign, and noted he was pleased to see students on campus still wearing the campaign paraphernalia after the big event days. He requested an article in the upcoming MPA newsletter to highlight the success of the campaign and let students know how and why their fees were spent on the events to ensure transparency.

Dev also noted that CISA had approached him to get involved in the campaigning as they had previously assisted with similar lobbying in NSW.

#### **4.1.4 Mental Health program for postgraduates**

A draft program of mental health initiatives for 2019 was distributed to the committee for feedback. The committee were happy with the planned increase in mental health initiatives, but requested more seminars be included. A discussion took place about how spaces play an important role in supporting mental health. There was a need for places for students who were feeling isolated to meet other students, but equally important were quiet spaces, where students could “de-stress”. Ash and Jeane agreed to provide Jenny with detailed feedback on the proposed offerings, and also proposed that student focus-groups should be run to ensure the program caters to the range of student needs within the postgraduate community.

#### **4.1.5 Thesis-writing bootcamp evaluations**

Noted. Due to the very high levels of positive feedback, this event will be run again in 2019.

### **4.2 General Business**

#### **4.2.1 Proposed fixed locations for MPAEC meetings**

Noted. The committee agreed to the proposed schedule of MPAEC meeting locations.

#### **4.2.2 Proposed new staff positions**

The Executive Officer reported that adjustments to the postgraduate enrolment figures received by the MPA from the University have shown a large increase in postgraduate enrolments in 2018, with increases expected to continue over the next few years. As the MPA budget is tied to enrolment numbers, this means a substantial increase in funds. The MPA Funding Agreement requires the MPA to expend the collected SSAF in the same year it is paid, so it is proposed that the staffing be restructured and increased, along with the operational budget to cater to the increase in demand for events, activities and support from the postgraduate community. In general, the association intends to run larger events that cater for higher numbers of postgraduates, as well as retaining the small, tailored events for specific cohorts. More activity is required on Clayton campus as well as improved connections with the HDR cohort. Delivery of services to the Monash Medical Centre, AMREP and Law Chambers as well as Peninsula campus will be developed, along with online support for distance education postgraduates. Parkville campus is well supported by PPA with social events, but the central MPA services such as advocacy could be better integrated. There is also a need to grow the volunteering, mentoring and postgrad group grant areas in response to postgraduate demands.

The committee discussed the proposed staff restructure and agreed that the targeted areas for growth were in line with postgraduate community expectations. It was noted that it was important for the MPA to respond to growing postgraduate demands that postgraduate SSAF be directed to

activities and services decided on and directed by the postgraduate community.

It was moved:

*That the proposed staff restructure as tabled be implemented.*

Moved: Devendra Singh  
Seconded: Roby Vota  
Abstentions: 2  
Carried.

Due to the creation of new positions, additional funds would be required to advertise the roles in the next couple of months. As such, it was moved:

*That \$2000 from the Staff conference attendance budget line be moved to the Recruitment budget line.*

Moved: Rohan Hosseini  
Seconded: Roby Vota  
Carried.

#### **4.2.3 CAPA ACM 2018**

It was announced that the 2018 CAPA ACM is to be held from December 5-7 in Newcastle, NSW. Expressions of interest to attend were received from Bec, Roy, Dev and Dorothy.

### **5. Membership**

An office-bearer election was held to pre-elect the MPAEC President to take over from Eni in December when he completes his course. The Executive Officer acted as Returning Officer. Nominations were invited for the position of President. Bec nominated Robyn who accepted the nomination and was seconded by Roy. Ash nominated herself and was seconded by Roy. Avi nominated himself and was seconded by Karan.

Each candidate was allocated a maximum of 3 minutes to speak to the committee and respond to questions while opposing candidates waited outside the room. Voting was carried out as per the MPA General Regulations. In the first round, Avi was the lowest ranking candidate and as such was eliminated. Voting continued, but neither remaining candidate obtained an absolute majority. The committee discussed the candidates and a second voting round was held. Again neither candidate obtained an absolute majority.

It was agreed that the elections would be held over until the November MPAEC meeting to give committee members the opportunity to reconsider the two remaining candidates.

### **6. Next meeting**

The next meeting will be held in November at a time and date to be determined by member availability. Two availability sheets will be distributed in the coming week for the November and December meetings.

The meeting closed at 1:28pm.