



Postgraduate Working Group Meeting #3 October 12th 2020 Online Call 4pm – 5pm.

Agenda

1. Introduction

- a. Meeting starts at 16:05
- b. In Attendance: (taken at 4:12, it is likely there were others in and out)

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|--------|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|--|
| KB | Kelsey Bruce (Me) | | Lucien (He/Him) - SU Academic Affairs | |
| UA | USI Account (Host) | | Luke Daly | |
| GT | Gary Tobin, USI (Co-host) | | Martin Smyth | |
| Megan | Megan O'Neill USI (Co-host) | | Moya Browne | |
| SB | Seb Bierema | | Nicole MSU | |
| CO | Conor O'Reilly | | Nicole PK | |
| DS | Dajana Sinik NCI President | | QUBSU Postgraduate | |
| EC | Eimear Curtin UCCSU | | Rachael Sarsfield Ryan IADTSU | |
| HJ | Hamza Jamaa | | Rhiannon Louise Kavanagh | |
| Lee | Lee Bennett | | Sarah Carter | |
| Lucien | Lucien (He/Him) - SU Academic Affairs | | Seb Bierema | |

2. Campus check-ins, major updates regarding postgrads, challenges emerging, etc.

- a. NUIG – Seb Bierema on NUIG Paying PGs for teaching
 - i. Dean of Graduate Studies is convening a working group to investigate PG working conditions. Conditions at this point are the students are required to teach and are not paid.
 - ii. Will look at conditions of students across Ireland and Europe. Kelsey is mentioning that students in the US are generally paid – do we really want to be worse off than the US conditions?

- iii. The working group will make a recommendation at the end of the year as far as what to do. There are only two students on the WG (the other being the mature student officer), so it seems likely that the recommendation will be inadequate.
 - iv. Eimear Curtin – students who have a scholarship from the college are required to do 150 hrs of teaching. Students do not have the time of day to do that and all the other things that need to be done. Some colleges are reconsidering and students will be paid going forward. There is a lower number of unpaid teaching hours. There are also questions about how are hours counted – is prep work counted? Teaching online takes quite a bit of prep work. It was being discussed to train graduate students on how to use virtual learning platforms and then being expected to teach lecturers. This is not in practice yet, but it has been suggested.
- b. Queens University Belfast: Tasha, on teaching assistants. Queens does require payment per module and per class – i.e. both prep work and teaching. You are paid £16/hour. Laboratory pay is a little higher due to more hands on and health and safety aspects. 6 hours is the limit per week. Queens promised face to face teaching – will that be lumped on students instead of academics? It seems like the risk is being forced on to the students. From a UG perspective, they came to Uni to be taught by experts in the field and proper academics, not slightly more educated peers. Students are also emailing their TAs and asking if they should be coming in when they have symptoms and then deciding to come in anyways.
- c. Gisele Canlon from Trinity: Lab demonstrators are totally on the front line. They work with students who are working in pubs and out and about. Demonstrators were the first ones pushed into the fray. The teaching is in two-hour chunks (one hour, forty-five minutes because after two hours you are processed differently as a close contact for COVID tracing). TAs are being asked to clean the spaces too, but they should only have to be responsible for cleaning their own desk and seat. PGs are also being paid to work in rooms where they are

supervisors of rooms ensuring mask compliance and students are cleaning their space. It gives students a place to come and safely access internet and learning. Students are paid €10.96/hr to basically sit and study while watching the room.

- d. Follow up with NUIG
- e. Follow up with Trinity
- f. Follow up with QUB

3. Items for information

- a. Research and Graduate Education committee meeting update.
 - i. Adam met w/ group along w/ VP Grad Affairs. There is a desire within the wider HEA to ensure increased funding. There is a budget of €49 million for research PGs – will be spent for researchers whose work has been delayed due to COVID. Students can apply for this. Details to come.
- b. Postgraduate Funding Northern Ireland
 - i. Adam has meeting next week with Northern Irish PG reps to look at structures in NI and how they differ from ROI.
- c. Postgraduate Supports
 - i. The Student Survey.ie has a lot of the data we are hoping to collect.
- d. Postgraduate Representative Training
 - i. Trainer from last meeting was delighted with the work of the PGWG. Will have a follow up meeting closer to/after Christmas. Hoping to have training rolled out for semester 2.
- e. Postgraduate Symposium
 - i. IRC meeting this morning seeking sponsorship. In the past they have sponsored a prize for research presentations. Last year that was wrapped into the Research Matters campaign that went very well. Looking to make this its own separate event for the future.
 - ii. Looking to have talks and digital stands at the event too. Looking to IRC, NStEP, SIPTU, and IFUT to gauge interest in events.
 - iii. Looking for students to speak as well.

4. Items for discussion

- a. Postgraduate perspective on remote learning.
 - i. Gisele has lead us on this. UGs seem to be content with online teaching. How are we feeling? Seb – right now, being encouraged to be teaching online. Gisele – taught PGs want in person because they paid for it. Research PGs want online to stay safe. Networking is also key for many degrees and students don't have any ability to do that right now. Sarah adds international students want to get the education they paid (and were encouraged/forced to move here for).
- b. Postgraduate symposium content
 - i. Does anyone have any speakers they would recommend for the symposium? If you do, reach out to Adam. Adam wants to have panels.
- c. GNIB process for non-EU postgrads
 - i. Adam has approached the VP Citizenship and Equality on GNIB delays.
 - ii. Sarah Carter: failure to renew IRP means students cannot leave and return to the country. The IRP card has to be renewed annually and is €300 to obtain. Other countries in the EU don't even have fees associated with the process and the cards last for the whole degree. The Irish Examiner has been in contact with Sarah and she will send the info around.
 - iii. Adam is looking to get interviews with international students who are being affected by current conditions. Will be closer to Christmas.

5. A.O.B.

- a. Dajana Sinik NCI – RE: International students, and all students, being asked to be present on campus and in the country. We need clarity on what are campuses going to be doing next semester? We need answers. (Sarah will also add to the petition)
 - i. Also on data on different support systems for PGs – is there a timeline on when the data might be available and things might start moving. Adam will be looking at data tomorrow and

discussing it the next week. Next three weeks should have things.

- ii. Gisele – agrees nobody wants to be stuck in their rooms. Also, Christmas is coming and many students will be completely isolated and cut off and won't be able to travel. If we go to level 5, what will they do? Adam – can we bring this into a campaign for awareness at least?
- iii. Sarah – students who bought tickets to go home for Christmas are now losing money on not being able to go home because of the GNIB backlog.

6. Meeting closes at 5:07 pm