



Postgraduate Working Group

October 1st, 2022

Online Zoom Meeting (11:00-12:00)

Miontuairiscí/ Minutes

Attendance: -

Waqar Ahmed (USI), Shahboz Babaev (TUSSU), Jessica Perez (TUDSU), Jenna Barry (TUSSU), Jamie-Lukas Campbell (QUBSU)

1. Minutes of Meeting

The minutes of meeting were accepted without amendments.

2. Matters Arising from Minutes:-

- WA informed that the postgraduate working group sign-up sheet has been provided on the following link: <https://forms.office.com/r/Y6kvsj8AMd>. However, there was a low response, and it is not suitable to upload an incomplete members list on USI website.
- WA informed that inadequate stipend issue will be brought up to National Forum for Doctoral Education.
- Motion on International and Postgraduate Fees has been amended and passed during September CN.
- Postgraduate Engagement WG will assess the outcomes of pilot survey in next meeting.

3. Items for Discussion: -

3.1 Clarification to the [USI Postgraduate Workers Rights Charter](#)

- WA informed that at the first stage of drafting the new national charter for PGRs, the draft charter will be sent to postgraduate officers, all sabbatical officers, members of PGWG, PGWAI, PCAU, Non-EEA PhD Society, and ULPSU etc. to seek suggestions and amendments.
- JP suggested putting healthcare for non-EU PGRs in charter as well. Non-EU PGRs pay insurance as well as GP and health costs. International PG students cannot apply for health cards as well.

3.2 Postgrad Researchers' Payments of Work

- JB discussed the need for payment and support for teaching hours as well as hours needed for preparation.
- JP suggested that numbers should be demonstrating hours and not working hours in the Charter. In TU Dublin, there are different levels and pay grades for demonstrating. According to the scholarship contracts, they can't go for more than 6 hours. We should fight for higher payments for demonstrations and for those hours which are not paid at all.
- WA stated that we should be clear about what exactly we are asking. Be it stipend, demonstration, lab work, workshops etc. There is no standardization of PhD contracts, unlike academic jobs and scales. This point may be raised in the NFDE Advisory Group.
- SB said that many offices are not happy with PhDs taking classes. We may need to sit down with TUI if need be. Part-time lecturers, who are working full-time in other organizations, are getting more than full-time PhDs.

4. Local Issues:-

- J-LC raised that students are not paid on time in QUB. Some PhD TAs are paid 6-month late.
- SB highlighted that a PhD student was about to teach for more than 6 hours at TUS. Multiple offices discussed the issue and they were not happy with that. The offices said that the Teachers' Union of Ireland (TUI) wouldn't be happy about it. That PhD student was asked not to take more than 6 hours. Some PhD students don't get any teaching hours at all.
- SB stated that SFI and IRC are increasing funds but where we stand in the President's Seat Fund. Who runs this fund, (HEI or Government) and we need to lobby for that as well.
- SB stated that the PGRs from TUS Limerick are getting 6K, and people in Dublin are not happy with 18.5k while we are at 6k a year and TUS Athlone are getting 12K a year. Students in Dublin get more attention and increases as compared to other places and this needs to be brought to attention.
- JP said that in TU Dublin there is a stipend gap as well. Some PGRs are making 10, 16, and 18.5k and they think we are not raising voices for them. We should be focusing on increased stipends for those making less as well. In the charter, we can add something like equal research, and equal pay.
- WA said that there are institutional issues and then there are governmental issues regarding low PGR stipends and gaps, and we have the challenge of looking at which front we deal with and how.
- JP shared that she is working at an institutional level. We need to work with HEIs as unions as well. At TUD, we are doing a cost-effective plan with the research office to see how much it would cost the university to raise the stipends. Postgraduate officers may talk to their institutions to do a cost plan and then as USI, we can work on how much each HEI needs to raise the stipends and ask the govt to fund.
- WA informed that he will bring PhD stipend issues during the upcoming NFDE meeting and with the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.

- SB said the cost of living in Athlone along with Non-EU Insurance and IRP payments are not manageable. A lot of PGRs are leaving academia as they are frustrated due to the lack of support.
- JB suggested that we should demand for attrition rates be made public. There is a need to ask HEIs to do Exit interviews for postgrads to find out why the postgrads are leaving.

5. Items for Information / Pointí Eolais:-

5.1 Research Matters Competition

USI/Irc PGR video competition has ended with winners announced. All the details here: <https://usi.ie/usi-news/why-research-matters-video-competition-2022/>

5.2 Advisory Panel

Advisory Panel of the Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs 2022-23 has been updated and approved at CN. The panel can be accessed here: [VPPGA Advisory Panel 2022-23.docx](#)

5.3 Plan of work

The plan of work for Semester 1 has been presented to CN. The plan includes Postgraduate Workers rights Charter, Postgraduate Funding, Postgraduate Research Matters Video Competition, Postgraduate Representation and Engagement, Postgraduate-specific training and support, Equality of access to non-EU Postgraduates. The details can be accessed here: [VPPGA Plan of Work-July-Dec22.docx](#)

6. A.O.B:-

- J-LC stated that PhD progression is a big issue. Especially, in Non-humanities, there are no fair grievance procedures between PGRs and supervisors.
- JB suggested that there is need to lobby for conflict management procedures be implemented for postgraduate/ Supervisor relationships
- J-LC stated that after the PGR degree, PGRs are not supported for careers or jobs. There can be 6 months of post-PhD work.
- JB asked for postgraduate regulations and contracts. There are no specific separate contracts for research stipend and demonstration (Called CPT/ contract part-time in TUS) at many HEIs.
- JB said that Part-time Postgraduate officers are not brought up to the national councils which makes it exclusive and not inclusive. How can USI VPPGA engage with postgraduates when they are not brought to the NC meetings? JB suggested bringing that point to CG. JP stated that it is directly related to the local SUs. All SUs are needed to be encouraged to bring PG officers to NC. WA agreed that we need to encourage more PG officers in NC, and he will bring that point to the USI CG.
- SB suggested a large representation of postgraduates in any upcoming high-level meetings. It would be more effective to bring voices from outside Dublin as well.
- SB suggested the duration of the meeting should be 2 hours. JB said that lunch and Evening timing is better for the meeting. WA suggested sharing a doodle for the next meeting.

WA thanked everyone for their attendance and participation before closing the meeting. Next meeting to be held in November.
