

Imperial College Union
GSA Chair Report
A Note by the Graduate Students' Association Chair

A brief run-down on what the GSA has been up to since August...

Casework

As was mentioned verbally at the last Council, I have been involved in a number of cases. It would be highly inappropriate not to mention a gross breach of confidence for me to comment on the nature of these cases but I can inform Council that I am currently engaged in handling a total of 12 individual cases, many of which take considerable time to investigate and resolve and have accounted for the majority of my time. I can, however, report that three cases have been resolved to the satisfaction of all parties and I am confident that the other current cases shall also be resolved.

PhD Pay

One of the cases that has been referred to me related to PhD students being paid less than the minimum agreed last year. This is a concerning situation and I am actively chasing it up in order to resolve not only this case but ensure that other PhD students are not also being under-paid. I also find it extremely concerning that I have found out that there has been another case of PhD pay problems that I was not informed of and only found out by reading the President's report.

Elections

So far, the GSA has had one election over the summer (albeit twice), and I'm glad to say that this election was successfully concluded and would like to express my thanks to those involved in the smooth (re)running of this election.

Unfortunately, for the rest of the positions on the GSA committee, only the GSA Treasurer position had a candidate standing and so the other positions will have to be re-opened. I hope to have emails sent out to all post-graduates who have yet to vote to encourage a higher turnout than we have seen in recent GSA elections. I remain very concerned at the lack of good candidates coming to the fore and am less than sanguine about the future of the GSA with a lack of good officers stepping forward to fill these vacancies.

Post-Graduate Freshers' Week

I had a very successful meeting with Prof. Mary Ritter (Pro-Rector, Postgraduate and International Affairs) during which we discussed the provision for new postgraduate students. I raised the idea of creating a post-graduate Freshers' Week before the main start of session, there was a lot of interest in this and I believe that we can significantly improve the provision of information to new post-graduates. The initial plans are to hold a series of sessions introducing new post-graduates to Imperial including orientation sessions for international students and social events to help build a post-graduate community. This was only an initial meeting but there was a lot of interests and it was thought to be a good idea, I plan to take this idea to post-graduates once a committee has been formed and hope that it is well received and progress can be made.

Graduate Medics

I have also held initial discussions with some graduate medical students about the provision for graduate-entry medical students. There is a relatively small number of students studying medicine who have already completed a degree. As these

students are registered on an undergraduate degree, they are seen as undergraduates by the College and also the Union yet their interests and needs are much similar to taught post-graduates. I believe that these students should be catered for by the GSA in addition to ICSMSU (similar Guilds or RCS PGs being members of both the GSA and their relevant FU), whilst I am not proposing that graduate-entry medics are necessarily made members of the GSA (although this may be the best eventual solution, this is something that would only be proposed after due consultation), I do believe that they should be included in a group containing people closer to them in interests. This may become more important in future years with the start of the graduate-entry medical course resulting in graduate students no longer being accepted onto the undergraduate medical course, a view shared with graduate medical students. I have spoken to the medic PG-rep and also medic president about this and they both seem very supportive of the initiative. I am hoping that more meetings will be possible in the near future in order to bring this into fruition.

Welcome Sessions

I have been involved in the welcome sessions for new post-graduate students and have done a number of talks in departments as well as the main sessions. One session I feel was particularly useful to both parties was a talk to part-time MSc students in Hammersmith where I was able to provide information about the Union as a whole as well as the GSA (with a large portion of the talk devoted to how to get an NUS card, as this was a matter that seemed to be of interest to a large number of the students). I hope that new post-graduates did not find these sessions too long or arduous and that there was some useful information provided.

Freshers' Fayre

I did not have a GSA stall at Freshers' Fayre as I felt that it would be far better for the post-graduate students to spend the day looking at the clubs the Union has to offer rather than the GSA stall as the GSA has many more ways to communicate with the members. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Ally on a successful Freshers' Fayre.

Meetings

I have also been involved in a number of the usual meetings including Council, the Executive Committee, two meetings of the CSB (as an observer) and one meeting of RWB as well as some other ad-hoc meetings as and when required.

JM – 25/10/07