

**GSA Budget Appeal**

*Proposed by Stefan Nubert, GSA Treasurer*

*Seconded by Hannah Theodorou, Deputy President (Education & Welfare) and Jenny Morgan (ICU President)*

**General Points**

- The GSA budget was cut by 20% £1200 from a previous allocation of £1500.
- Historically the GSA budget has been significantly lower when compared to similar clubs & societies (e.g. GSA grant received 07/08 - £845.25).
- Due to the historic low budget allocations the GSA has mostly been self sufficient due to receiving donations from individuals and various societies in previous years. However this SGI fund has been basically used to prop up the GSA and cover losses.
- The GSA caters to the interests of postgraduate students from all faculties and represents them to the Union, College and nationally, whilst also providing specific postgraduate only events designed to suit the interests of postgraduate students.
- As an example: the GSA at the moment will receive £1200 in comparison to approximately £4,000 received by the RSM, which caters only for the interests of RSM students/clubs and is a mostly undergraduate aimed in its events and activities.
- The GSA committee feels that the budget allocation is far too low for a society that should be in place for the needs of all postgraduates.
- The GSA intends to increase its role within the structure of student representation and welfare for postgraduates, whilst also potentially restructuring its committee to allow more input from postgraduate reps and providing new events more suited to postgraduates.
- The GSA treasurer was not elected via the online voting system but instead installed in the position due to an issue with the ICT system not representing his account as a student account due to his returning to Imperial, having graduated 12 months previously. This resulted in missing financial training sessions.
- Attempts were made by the GSA treasurer to arrange a financial training session, with an initial email sent on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2008, to which no reply was received. Members have still to receive financial training.
- No communication was received from the Union to either the GSA presidents or treasurer's personal and GSA email accounts in regards to budgets and deadlines etc. No GSA representation was present at the meeting when the budget was cut.
- GSA was not informed of the budget cut by any official means.

**Appeal Basis**

In addition to the above general points outlying a deficiency in funding provided to the GSA, the appeal for the GSA budget, at a minimum to be restored to the original value of £1500 (with potential for increase) are as follows:

- The GSA is vital, but undervalued and under-utilised body within the college with the potential to provide greater support to postgraduate students. This budget cut undermines any attempts by the GSA to expand and grow as a body and improve and increase its role within the college and provide events for the postgraduate student body.
- Production of Postscript (the graduate student's magazine) has historically been a significant cost (£800-£1000). Current costs for the upcoming issue are £873 ex. VAT for 1000 copies (for approximately 5000 students).
- These costs will use the entire remainder of the GSA budget plus a portion of the SGI, leaving little for events. In the event of this, the GSA will be left with approximately £3000 of the SGI for all future expenses including Postscript.
- The GSA intends, with the assistance of the Union and Graduate schools to produce an extended issue of Postscript ready for the beginning of the next academic year to act as a handbook for PhD student representatives, but also providing contact lists and information on the structure of postgraduate representation.
- Costs for the handbook are expected to be in the region of £3000-4000 for approximately 2000 copies of a 52 page A4 booklets. The handbook is intended to act as a guide to the structure of postgraduate representation to assist reps with various issues within their role. This will enable all reps to undertake the role with suitable guidance available and allow reps in various departments to undertake their role in a similar way, as the current situation results in different (sometimes no) information provided to postgraduate students in different departments.
- The GSA does not expect the Union to entirely fund this proposal, however the budget cuts and overall low budget does limit this proposal's potential of becoming a reality. As a result talks are in progress with the Graduate Schools as to their providing of a proportion of the funding to produce this booklet. The GSA looks to the Union to contribute to this booklet by restoring and/or increasing the funds available to the GSA and/or providing content.
- The GSA also intends that Postscript will be as self-supporting as possible with the inclusion of adverts and sponsorship. Various avenues are being pursued currently.

### **Proposal**

On the basis of the previous points, the GSA proposes the following:

- Restoration of the GSA budget to the original £1500 figure proposed. The basis of this will obviously require budget reductions in other areas. The GSA represents the welfare and views of postgraduate students, a significant proportion of students at Imperial; due to this the GSA believes an increased budget allocation is required.

- The GSA believes that the ACC budget due to its significant larger amount, would allow a minimum cut of £300 without any detrimental impact to the ACC. If not so, potentially Sport Imperial could potentially provide a supplement of £300 to the affected clubs or reduction in facilities hire if they take use of their facilities.
- The GSA believes further small cuts (£500 & less) may be taken from the RCC budget without significant impact on any clubs and societies.
- The GSA believes an increase in budget allocation should be provided to an overall figure of £2500. This will allow the GSA to produce more than one issue of Postscript, using the grant and reducing the impact of the SGI. But also allow the GSA to utilise the remaining SGI to provide events (with the intention of recuperating costs) for postgraduate students.
- The CGCU, RCSU, RSM and ICSMSU receive separate budget allocation. Previous years have seen donations to the GSA by department bodies. The GSA believes that small cuts (£500 and less) from these budgets are not unreasonable if the GSA is meant to represent their students.
- The RSM has a society within the department, not recognised as an official society receiving funding from the department. We have seen a growing interest in setting up departmental societies for Postgraduate Students which should fall under the GSA. This further increases the demands on the GSA funds.
- To summarise the above, the GSA proposes budget cuts may come from the following areas as options:
  - As stated £300 from ACC budget to restore the £1500 figure (if only option available);
  - A further cut of between £200 from the overall ACC budget (in addition to previous point);
  - A cut of between £300-£500 from the RCC overall budget;
  - A cut of between £100-£500 from (any or all of) the CGCU, RSM, RCS and ICSMSU.
  - A cut of between £300- £700 from the tours budget because this is less integral to the activities and needs of all Imperial students.

In summary the GSA requests that its budget be restored to the original figure of at least £1500 on the basis of the size of the student body it represents. The GSA believes cuts may be made elsewhere from faculty unions on the basis that postgraduate affairs are meant to be the duty of the GSA. The GSA also requests a budget increase to approximately £2500, not only due to the size of its role within the college, but also due to its historic limited funding.