

Report from GSA President – Robert Tang

Here is a summary of what the GSA is working on:

1. Postgraduate accommodation

Last year, the GSA has been informed that the College intends to give out a £25/week subsidy for students who stay at GradPad Griffon Studios at Clapham for 2012/2013. Our understanding is that all PG halls will be branded under the 'GradPad' name with rents seeing a slight increase for the next academic year. We have requested to see the full price list

2. (Unconfirmed) Closure of Clayponds Halls of residence/ Holland Bar

We are aware that our members have become concerned after Felix reported the potential closure of Clayponds Halls of residence and Holland Bar at South Kensington campus. I must stress that the decision is until now, unconfirmed, as far as the GSA understands. The GSA is actively working on the issue, including communicating closely with the Union President and the College as well as looking through notes from last year from our accommodation focus group. We are disappointed the GSA only received little information on the issue initially. As (1) and (2) generated high levels of students interest, the GSA will hold a PG panel discussion session on accommodation with an update from the Union President regarding the Clayponds/Holland Bar issue in the immediate week. We hope to provide our members and the Council an update soon on the issue

3. Securing GSA budget for 2012/2013

The GSA has finalised and submitted its budget application for next academic year. We hope to receive around the same amount as last year with increased provisions of funding for publicity and organisation of PG events next year to attract students and to raise the GSA and the Union's profile with PG students which is desperately needed. I must point out that the GSA's budget is comparatively minimal in comparison to other Faculty Unions and give the PG's population is around 50% of College and have seen an increase in number. We hope to build on successes with new events (e.g. screening of PhD movie and GSA Talent night) this year

4. GSA Elections 2012

We will hold elections this year at the same time as the elections of Sabbatical Officers and the rest of the Union. PGs are often deterred to run or have resigned from GSA positions due to workload and lack of incentives. The GSA will try hard to promote the upcoming elections. GSA has undergone internal restructuring and added new role such as Representation Officer to allow better communication between ourselves with the College and the Union. In the long run, I believe postgrads at the College would be greatly benefited to have someone dedicated working full time at the Union for better PG experience. We will later hold sessions to allow PGs to have a say on future direction of GSA and to find solutions build a stronger voice and avoid under representation of postgraduates

5. Academic and welfare representation

Members of the GSA will continue to attend Graduate School and Union meetings this term. AWOs will hold academic and welfare committees to collect issues from department and course reps. We are still in preliminary discussion with the Graduate school of creating postgraduate space and GSA working space as well as the new

accommodation being built at new campus (Imperial West). We welcome the new 'Rep week' initiative. AWOs will provide updates on issues in the next report

6. GSA Newsletter, GSA Forum and GSA Wiki

The GSA is working progressively to improve means of communications with our members, especially PGs based on medical campuses who often feel distant from the happenings at Union and College. As well as promoting our new Forum and Wiki platforms, we may start advertising our newsletter in Felix

Report from GSA Services Officer - Alexandra Turp

Transferable Skills Review - Update and thank you event

After several months of consultations regarding the restructuring the transferable skills courses that follows the fact that Robert's funding running out, the Transferable Skills Review committee was summoned together to summarise the changes that are going to be introduced at the undergraduate, masters, postgraduate and postdoctoral levels.

PG Masters (Taught) - It was felt that the masters courses should and already have the transferable skills training embedded into the course structure, as the students' timetables are very full. This will be done at the level of individual departments and courses. It will be encouraged that the courses cover aspects of employability, being future leaders and innovation and sector leading. The implementation of this will be now left with the Postgraduate Professional Development Committee (PPDC).

PhD students - The lists A and B of TSS courses will be removed and simplified. The courses will be phased and suited to the different stages of a PhD training as it was before. It was felt by the panel that a lot of students do not have enough information about the choice of courses that they should attend. This will be tackled by clearer signposting of the courses and to some extent by individual tailoring of the courses by students mentors (see below).

The elements that will be introduced and stressed throughout the programme are careers, business development and leadership. The structure of the TS programme will be as follows:

- TS courses will be introduced at induction days
- 9-12 months basic research skills - 6 compulsory courses chosen from four categories with an assessment at the end
- taking stock session with the aim of bringing all the students who started their PhD at other times than October
- 20 months - development of other skills such as advanced presentation skills or presenting at conferences, not compulsory
- 30 months - careers workshops, completion, not compulsory

It was also felt that the current mentoring structure needs to be changed and it should include elements of guidance through transferable skills training and opening students' horizons in terms of careers after a PhD. It was proposed that the mentoring is be done by a senior member of staff who would take care of a cohort of students. Regular once a term will be encouraged. This should be slowly implemented at the level of individual

campuses and departments and rather than being compulsory, it will be strongly encouraged over the next few years for the departments to switch their mentoring to the new system. PPDC will carry on the reinforcement of these changes to the TS courses and mentoring from now onwards.

Library Services - The GSA received complaints from PG students regarding the noise levels in the central library. This was communicated to the library staff who responded that they encourage peer pressure but the library attendants will continue patrolling regularly and ask people to be quiet if appropriate. A possibility of having separate space allocated only to the postgraduates has not been favoured as it would not make the best use of the library space, which the GSA received as a fair argument.

Careers Services - Services Coordinator and the Careers Coordinator are working on collecting more feedback from postgraduates. As it is difficult to summit students to individual meetings on the subject, they will take advantage of the system of student representatives and attend the AWO meetings to discuss opinions on IC services. This will be also supplemented by asking for individual students' feedback and discussions on the GSA forum.