



# GSU

IMPERIAL GRADUATE  
STUDENTS' UNION

Activity Report to Imperial College Union Council

June 2021

By Zixiao Wang

President of Graduate Students' Union (GSU)

## Overview:

Due to the impact of Covid-19, honestly speaking, this academic year is difficult for us. We had to suspend all in-person activities and meeting, this generate significant impacts for students' engagements and peers' communications.

Meanwhile, the Covid-19 also exposed some potential problems those are worth for us to reflect and therefore improve our future works, this will be discussed in this report.

As the GSU President, in general, I spent around 17 to 20 hours on GSU works every week (the required weekly time by Union is 10 hours), which includes 8 to 10 hours' meetings at College level committees and broads (sometimes also attended some faculty committee meetings) and Union colleagues, 5 hours' meeting preparation (this includes reading the papers, prepare the comments, suggestions and questions for College senior leaders and talk with students about their opinions towards specific college policy). Further, I spent 5 hours dealing with other GSU works, including responding emails from students, college and union colleagues, editing the GSU presidents' email to PG Community and having in person/online meeting with students.

## College Level meetings:

Key College level meetings attended by GSU president are summarised here:

(1) **Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC)** meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2021:

- discussed the issues of academic regulations, study abroad task, student casework (include student complaints and amendments to the fitness to study procedure), postgraduate taught annual monitoring and degree outcomes statement.

(2) **Programmes Committees** on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2021:

- discussed the new programme proposals (BSc Biomedical Technology Ventures, MRes AI and Machine Learning, MSc Applied Paediatrics and MSc Computational Genomics)
- reviewed the MSc Business Analytics (on-campus and online) courses.

(3) **Postgraduate research quality committees** on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2021:

- review the update of PG (MPhil and PhD) regulations.
- One point here need to highlight here: Within the paper titled "*UPDATE OF RESEARCH DEGREE REGULATIONS*", it was mentioned "*Students who wish to retain access to College facilities whilst engaged in writing up their thesis may register for a 12-month writing up period. A registration fee of £200.00 will be payable. A student who still has experimental work to perform at this stage cannot*

*move onto writing up status and will continue to pay full fees*". This means the PhD students who are in final year (writing-up period) will not be allowed to lab unless they pay the full tuition fee.

- We opposed it and believed the PhD students who are in writing-up should still be granted with lab work permission since additional experimental data are always required during thesis writing in order to support arguments, and a banning of lab work during writing-up period would only damage one's thesis quality.

(4) **Senate** meetings on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2021 and 24<sup>th</sup> June:

- discussed the issues of Covid-19 response, admissions update, vision for education and student experience and preventing harassment and sexual misconduct towards students and approve the reports from Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee, Prizes and Medal Awarded, the appointment of external examiners and the awards of degrees;
- (we) highlighted most College students (PG and UG) want in-person teaching and learning since virtual study brought huge troubles for communication and feedback quality.
- highlighted the in-person learning/ lab should prioritise the MSc students this summer, as this is the only opportunity for MSc students to enjoy the campus life before the end of their programmes
- stressed senior university leadership pay extra attention the quality of PhD supervision and raised two business school PhD supervision issues in directly to ask for immediate solutions.

**Other meetings:**

**(1)** met the International Officer-elect (in-person) and deputy president (education)-elect (telephone) to discuss future working plan, postgraduate supervision issues and Covid related teaching quality issues.

**(2)** communicated with 24 PGR students and 17 PGT students in person or online (from March to June), consulted the issues of GSU committee restructure (how to improve PGT student representation), dealt with PhD supervision problems and collected opinion for college's Covid related policies

- most common PhD supervision issue: students in trouble with supervisors and made themselves failed one of a milestones (ESA or LSR) and found difficult to complete their degree in time.

### **GSU Vice President (representation) resignation:**

- GSU Vice President Lintong Li announced to resign due to terrible eye diseases on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> April 2021.
- The resignation letter and medical report attached in Appendix 1 and 2.
- Solution: Through an internal discussion within GSU committee, GSU Vice- President (research)-elect Tianhao Zhang started on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2021 as a supplement.
- 2 hours' training provided to Tianhao by GSU president on 12<sup>th</sup> May to facilitate him fulfil the PG representation responsibility.

### **Operations:**

- Finance: worked with GSU Treasurer to make next years' (2021/22) budget plan, submitted to Union and wait for final approval.
- Preparing GSU President's welcome letter for academic year 2021/22.
- Preparing the GSU advertisement flyers and logo pens for fresher's week 2021/22.
- Worked with graduate school and faculties seeking solutions to fulfil the vacant GSU Academic and Welfare Officer roles (PGR engineering, business, medicine and PGT engineering, science, business, medicine).
- Sponsorship: in communication with potential Epidemic Prevention Products companies to fundraise masks and hand sanitizers for Imperial PG community.
- Designing new GSU banners, posters and advertising video;

### **Matters for discussion:**

Based on this year's working experience as GSU President, we want to raise following academic related issues for discussion:

- (1) If we need a clear criterion to assess committee members' performance and contribution and a by-law to push the sleeping people with low contribution over the year.
- (2) We need a committee jointly composed by Union and university members to push and monitor departments' dealing with PhD students' complaints. (recently, the PhD student's complaints raised to departments usually did not receive enough attention, a better solution might be raising the issues to college levels).
- (3) A campaign to lobby university introduce free academic English course for PGT student with non-English speaking undergraduate backgrounds.

## **Acknowledgement:**

Huge thanks to all volunteers and staffs who worked closely with GSU in this year, special appreciation to Union President Abhijay and Deputy President Michaela.

Congratulation to all who had been successfully elected or re-elected, looking forwards to keeping working with you.

Goodluck for your final examinations and projects, I wish you a good result.

## **Appendix 1**

The resignation letter from Lintong Li (ex-GSU Vice President representation)

*Dear Zixiao,*

*Please accept this email as a formal notification that I am resigning from the role of GSU Vice President (Representation). My last day in office will be 30th April.*

*I really enjoyed the time during the past few months to advocate for postgraduate issues, this not only improved my skills of communication and leadership, but also provided me with opportunity to meet new people (even though online). However, I have long suffered from a terrible eye disease since December last year, which always made myself feel dizzy and headache during the working time.*

*I apologise for the inconvenience that I have brought to you and the committee, and I wish all you best in the future.*

*Sincerely,*

*Lintong Li*