

SSLC Meeting
Tuesday 21st June 2022
Remote Meeting held via Microsoft Teams

Present:

Mary Cryan – Deputy Head of the Graduate School
Patrick Hudson – IGS Senior School Co-ordinator
Traiko Dinev – RAS representative
Ricky Zhu – AIAI representative
Arthur Brazinskas - ILCC representative
Anna Hadjitofi - IPAB representative
Lauren Fletcher - NLP representative
Kim Stonehouse - ICSA representative
Steiner Laenen – LFCS representative

This meeting was conducted as an open forum and representatives were asked in advance to bring any issues or discussion points with them to be raised with other students in attendance or IGS staff. IGS had asked for specific feedback relating to community building within the school.

1. Previous meeting actions

- a) IGS will include accommodation guidance within the induction material for September 2022 onwards.
MC did discuss the GPU issues (and the long turnaround of emails to Support) with the head of computing services, Alastair Scobie. They are aware of the issues facing students and staff and due to various staffing issues being resolved, they hope that turnaround can improve. MC suggested a GPU FAQ or wiki might be useful for PGRs to access so that contacting the computing team might not always be necessary.

Action – MC to discuss appropriate hosting of GPU/wiki for “enhanced” GPU content with Support (Support does have pages explaining details of the various clusters, but there is limited software content there).

2. Venture Builder Incubator

- a) Laura Bernal (The Venture Builder Programme Manager) asked in advance of this meeting if she could attend to give an overview of this program and ask if the SSLC could distribute information about this to the PGR community. Laura gave an overview of her role and the program and asked for some feedback from the SSLC members.

Action – SSLC members to distribute information relating to the Venture Builder Incubator to their cohorts.

3. Community building within the Informatics PGR student cohort

- a) This discussion began with an overview of the concerns from the head of school, Jane Hillston, and some ways IGS and the school might be able to help.
- b) The first option discussed related to 'in-office' get together. IGS would provide each office with some money (£10-£15 per head for example) and this could be spent by the students on some sort of social outing (cinema, dinner etc). This idea was generally quite popular but some students said that being able to arrange outings with neighbouring offices would be a good idea and give students a greater chance to meet more students outside of their normal environment. This would be possible but IGS would not be involved in the organisation of the meet ups and would just provide the funding for this. IGS are arranging for mailing lists for each office to be created as a better way for office mates and other offices to reach each other.
- c) MC has been in touch with institutes to ask about additional funding for various PGR community building ideas and this may help to organise more events and create more opportunities this coming year.
- d) Kim, our ICSA rep, has organised a PGR social event at the Glasshouse on the 26th August. There is a lot of excitement about this event within the PGR community and spaces are selling out fast.
- e) Some other feedback receives relating to what events the school could offer:
 - a. More events outside of the school. For example Edinburgh tourist tours.
 - b. Hikes and walks in and around Edinburgh.
 - c. More Firbush trips. Firbush is always a popular event though it can be expensive to the school so trips are limited. The group discussed the prospect of students paying deposits to cover the cost and therefore extend the funding the school has. The group agreed that around £25-£30 might be the maximum for this kind of thing as more than this may be unaffordable for some students and they should not be disadvantaged because of this. Given IGS budget, this will probably mean a maximum of 2 trips a year.
- f) MC asked the group what they thought about creating a PGR Society for the school similar to CompSoc at UG level. The group agreed this could be useful and would help to have more support for the students who are keen to organise social and academic events.
- g) For some students smaller events would be the preference and having these as options is important to make sure students who may struggle with larger crowds and spaces have events they are happy to attend.

4. General PGR feedback

- a) Shared Office Space:
 - a. Some students had raised an issue for them that some of the shared offices did not have anyone else in them from their research area and having others from their institute would be more beneficial. PH advised that any student that would like to be considered for an office move can contact him or IGS and we can let them know what is available. Only recently have there been more offices available for shared desks so this has meant there are more options available to students to be based in the same space as others in the research area.

- b) Cost of living stress:
 - a. Some students raised the issue of the cost of living rising and the impact this is having on students. Some asked if there was anything being done by the school or university to help with this. MC passed on information from the central university that the upcoming stipends for 22/23 were calculated in March by UKRI so the rise in the cost of living will not have been taken into consideration but students should see an increase in 23/24. In the meantime any student in financial difficulty can look into if they are eligible for hardship funds from EUSA.
 - b. Some of the students discussed a petition to put pressure on the university to act more quickly to help.

- c) Teaching Support:
 - a. Teaching support continues to be an issue for students with late payments and lengthy waits to get positions confirmed. This is more frustrating now with the cost of living issues discussed previously. MC mentioned that the appointment of positions next semester will be completed a lot earlier and this should help with some of these issues. Delays can be caused by emails from the teaching support admin team sending emails to accounts that students do not primarily use. MC will send out an email to students next year to advise them they need to check their TSP account.

- d) Our LFCS rep, Steiner, raised that he received feedback that it would be helpful to receive a note at the beginning of each year letting students know what their travel budget options would be for that year, so they can keep track.

- e) Visa issues:
 - a. Some of the feedback received related to support for tier 4 students who may be taking leave or perhaps an internship and how it would be useful to have a support system in place were they could perhaps chat to students from the same country for advice on their experiences.

- f) School Peer Support:
 - a. One rep asked if there was currently a peer support system in place so that students could contact fellow students for advice on areas of their research they are not confident with. Perhaps programming support for example or advice on using a specific piece of software. We don't have anything like this at the moment, but it would be interesting to explore – we know Compsoc ran something very similar for AT in the past.

Action – MC to contact students to see if there are many that would be keen to join a PGR student society.

Action – MC to check if T&D emails can be automatically forwarded to primary email addresses.

Next meeting TBA