

Imperial College Union  
**GSA President's Report – a note by Deena Blumenkrantz**

Welcome Events & Materials

- Thanks to the Union's Central & Membership Services Teams a wonderful Postgraduate Handbook was printed and distributed this year.
- Thanks to Alex Dahinten and Andrew Keenan, I was able to give an interesting & hopefully informative talk introducing the GSA to the new Postgraduate (PG) students who attended their Rector's Welcome Event.
- A similar presentation, with additional information about the Graduate Schools and Imperial College Union has been given to all GSA Academic Welfare Officers to distribute to their Departmental Representatives.
- PG Mingle is set to be good. Local welcome event at Hammersmith, but not elsewhere.

Representation Structure

- I am working to build relationships with all of the Directors of Postgraduate Study and bring them over to the belief that Departmental Representatives should attend regular GSA Academic Welfare Committee (AWC) meetings.
- Thanks to Sally Baker's "Short history of the Graduate Schools" we finally know which Departments need representing where and will consider merging the Academic Welfare Committees of Life and Physical Sciences, since they are all in the same faculty.

Elections

- Nominations are open for GSA Deputy President (Communications), GSA AWO (Physical Sciences), GSA AWO (Medicine), GSA Events Director, GSA Publicity Director & GSA Marketing Director

Communication

- Newsletters are flowing thanks to help from Union Central Services & Andrew Keenan.
- On the 4<sup>th</sup> of Oct the GSA's Facebook Page had

**502** monthly active users **94** since last week

**247** people like this **36** since last week

**2** wall posts and comments this week **10** since last week

**1,026** visits this week **641** since last week

- campaigns by discussion topic are being nurtured.
- Next AWCs need dates & rooms at end of Nov

Training

- Dates set: 4 & 9 Nov 2010

Events

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- GSA Mingle: 1116 PGs attended, so one of the busiest nights of the week. Very positive feedback (music was a bit quiet, but fixed by sound engineer)
- Clubs, Societies & Projects Fair (aka Fresher's Fair)  
Thanks to Andrew Keenan, Nikhil Shenai (Events Team), Neki Patel (AWO Physical Sciences) and especially Shivendra Singh (GSA Events Team-2009/10), (who despite having finished his Master's) helped out at the GSA table and collected about 150 email addresses of PGs who were interested in the 2010/11 Events Team.

Committee Meetings Attended in September & early October

- New Clubs Committee, Management Group, GSA Executive Committee (EC)

Exciting New Developments in the Postgraduate World

- Usman Jaffer, a PhD student, has shown interest in organising self-defence/exercise classes on the Hammersmith campus.
- Mark Jennings and others want to make an Energy Society, which will be of interest to UG & PG students and Staff across a number of Departments and Faculties. The desirable outcome does not fit with current club restrictions, in particular that Departmental Societies should only be for single departments and that according to the Union Constitution the GSA cannot oversee Dep Socs.
- Kedar Natarajan and 5 other PG students from the Clinical Sciences Centre in Hammersmith have formed a Student Committee. They are already organising two events for PG students.

Specific Issues

- Life Science Restructure is going ahead despite Union and GSA submissions.
- Thanks to Kendall, EPSRC funded PGs now get paid per hour for any work they undertake for their department on top of their agreed stipend.
- On behalf of a PG, Andrew Keenan sent a request to Registry to have "Province of China" removed from the Taiwan option on the graduation registration form.
- MatLab computer license considered for supercomputers in Engineering.
- eThesis is a pain, we are asking for more input.
- SCR service disturbs student, asked to start discussion on FB
- Hot lunch made available for Masters students in SCR while Tower Rooms were refurbished.
- Aphid labs got too hot and destroyed 2 PhD students work! Need to follow up.

Systemic Issues for Consideration

- I sense a bitterness among students over how much they are paying for their education. There is a need to provide free events and when events are not free to make sure they feel they are getting value for money. Is there a way

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we can work with college to show students where their money is going? For example, how much goes to rental of classroom/lab space, how much goes to their lecturers/instructors/graders, how much goes to the Union, etc... Is there a way we can make Union income and expenditures transparent?

- Overlap between Faculty Unions and the GSA: I think Postgraduates would benefit most from feeling part of both. How much information can they handle? How much crossover or contact should there be between GSA Departmental and Section Representatives and Faculty Union Committee members? Who should be the 1<sup>st</sup> point of call for PG students with academic or welfare issues? Should Faculty Unions invite PGs to their events?

Union Courses Desired

- How to design an interesting flyer