

## Minutes of Churchill College MCR Termly General Meeting - Lent 2015

Date: 27 January 2015, 7:30pm

Location: Sandy Ashmore Room

1. Attendance:
  - Present: Jacquelyne Poon, Alexis Kaminski, Arthur Zielinski, Hugo Wioland, Zhi Jin, Barbora Janulikova, Vahe Tshitoyan, Tiantian Chen, Karolis Misiunas,
2. Confirmation of minutes - Michaelmas 2014
  - The minutes from the Michaelmas 2014 TGM were confirmed.
3. Summary of MCR Activities (Jacquelyne Poon)
  - The MCR has held several successful events since the last TGM. In particular, the Michaelmas term Guest Night was a blast, and the MCR/SCR seminar series has continued to get good turnout and strong feedback.
  - As an update from the last TGM, we are no longer ordering new chairs for the TV room, but will rather simply get chairs from the Tizard room.
  - Jacqui has been working on automating the room allocation system for the graduate student housing ballot. This is still in progress.
  - Barbora asked about what is changing with the ballot. Jacqui replied that currently, members of the JCR submit their choices online and a computer program does the allocation depending on pre-determined rules. In contrast, we currently do our allocation by hand, and we would like to be able to apply a similar program to our housing ballot.
4. Report on MCR Finances (Karolis Misiunas)
  - We currently have a lot of public money, which will be used to hopefully fund another academic trip and replace broken equipment.
  - We are running low on private funds. We are still waiting for college reimbursement on Freshers' Week money (since freshers had paid events and shirts put on their term bills this year). It should be noted that about 80% of Freshers' Week is paid for by the MCR.
  - There was a question about equipment money. There was a line on the website finances page and a post on the facebook group indicating that there is about £900 to spend on equipment.
  - It was pointed out that the website finances page is there for accountability for our spending. In addition, it was noted that magazine subscriptions entail a separate portion of the budget.
  - For equipment requests, suggestions should be made using the request forms on the website (not posts on the facebook group).
  - What happens if we don't spend this money? Not much happens immediately, and we can spend it later on. If we have a lot of money, we can buy something big. That being said, we don't want to have too much excess money so that we don't experience funding cuts, as we currently get a fixed amount from College proportional to the total money allocated for societies (via CCRFC).

- Stephen Phillipone asked how many requests it takes for an item to be purchased (in this case, a PS4). This depends on the incoming committee; however, in general cheaper items tend to just get bought while larger items are discussed with the treasurer and/or the committee based on interest. The Equipment Officer decides what goes to committee.
- The request form on the website will be checked to confirm that it is working properly.

## 5. Hustings

- President:

- Sonke Hee

1. To begin, Sonke thanks everyone for coming, and thinks the good turnout at the TGM is a good sign of participation in the MCR. He is ridiculously excited about running for the president position.
2. Sönke is German and even he can't pronounce his own name. He is a 2nd-year PhD student in astrophysics. He lives in the Wolfson Flats with his wife and daughter.
3. He has been involved with the MCR for the past 15 months and has a fair amount of experience and knowledge. He was the MCR academic officer last year along with Jan. During their term, they started the SCR seminars, started recording academic events and putting them on the Chu Talks website, and they reformatted the Conference on Everything.
4. He has a lot of contacts from his time on committee, and really enjoys working with Rebecca, Jennifer, and Shelley. Thanks to his daughter, he tends to have a good relationship with the senior college officers.
5. There is currently an awesome Churchill community. For example, there is the super active facebook page, and cool events like puppy cuddle day, the port fort, and the Churchill 2015 documentary screening to name a few.
6. As president, he wants to support this. A lot of these events are more spontaneous and organized on the fly, which he thinks shows an "organizationally entrepreneurial spirit".
7. He would like to revamp the website to integrate more social media and make information more easily available (e.g. the budget).
8. He would like to work with college for events to happen on short turnaround times, represent the MCR at the college committee level, and help people to make awesome new events that everyone will enjoy.
9. He is really excited to work with the MCR and the fantastic people in it - vote Sonke!

- Zhi Jin

1. Zhi is honoured to stand as a candidate for president and would like to thank the current committee members for devoting their time and energy to organizing events, especially Jacqui and Alexis, and Karolis and KC who are staying on for another year.
2. He is currently on the committee and has seen great change happening here. He would like to use his experiences from his undergrad years to develop them further.
3. He thinks it's important to get people involved. The recent welfare survey had a low response rate, and there are some events with low turnout.
4. He wants to have some signature activity for Churchill - some event so unique to the Churchill MCR that everyone knows it.
5. He wants to emphasize the role of the bartenders in communicating information between general members and the committee, and to point out people who need help.
6. As equipment manager, he noticed the large budget for equipment and for magazines/journals, which he wants to advertise more. He also wants to better advertise CCRFC, since he has had people ask him to buy equipment for the use of college societies. He wants to make sure underused sources of money get use.
7. He is thinking of the point of view of grad students who are in a critical stage of their lives, namely making the choice between academia vs. industry. He would like to invite PhD students to give talks to applicants to help with applications, and hold gatherings for those searching for jobs and invite the Career Centre people to help with improving job-hunting skills.
8. On the college level, he would like to keep an eye on things that might affect students in the future (e.g. the catering fixed charge from last year and the automatic accommodation system).
9. He emphasized that it is students' ideas that really matter, and asks people to please vote to make things possible since it's their choice that makes a difference.

- Questions:

1. Vahe: There are many active people in the MCR, but also passive people (e.g. the people currently in the room are those people who are already interested). Given the low welfare survey turnout, are there any steps you might take to increase participation?

- a. Sonke would try to reach out more with social media, though this might not work. He hasn't thought about this as he didn't know turnout was that low. He feels a good starting point would be GU council, where he would ask what other presidents might do to increase participation in their own colleges.
  - b. Zhi points out that we have a large committee relative to community size. He feels it is important for committee members to ask around and to get the bartenders to gather thoughts and ideas from the community. Surveys are one method to get an idea of what people are thinking, but it is also important to get day-to-day questions and to involve general members more.
2. Karolis: We used to have segregation of our community, e.g. by nationality/country of origin. Previously, there were attempts to rectify this by actively splitting up and mixing people in Freshers Week. Do you have any new ideas to bring to this context?
  - a. Zhi thinks we should focus on students' intentions and which way they'd like to go. If they'd like to go into academia, people such as the fellows might be helpful to them. If they want to go industry then people with those skills and links might be more helpful. The bar can be used regularly so people can come around and mix up. At this stage, people are more focussed on their purpose for the future.
  - b. Sonke thinks this is a really good question, and notes that there was a similar situation at Imperial. He noted that one of the best formals in his opinion was one with a seating plan where you have to sit with people you don't know, and thinks that maybe more events like that would help people to mix up. We could maybe start language learning circles which mixes specifically across language. While there is segregation by nationality, events that are more specific to certain interests might draw people out from their specific groups. A first step may be to monitor how bad the segregation is as a first step.
3. Jacqui: The role of president is quite taxing and can be quite time-consuming. How do you plan to balance your role as president with your role as a student here in Cambridge? What

are your thoughts on time commitment in this role and how you can achieve that?

- a. Sonke is incredibly excited and has been planning to apply for for the president position for more than half a year. He has been taking time management exercises with the Researcher Development Programme, has been using a google calendar, etc. His focus is on his PhD, his family, and the presidency. He has asked his supervisors about it as well - they were concerned he was doing too much, and he is trying hard to make sure this isn't an issue.
  - b. Zhi says that as a first year PhD student, he has a lot of town. He notes that his department is nearby, so it is easy to be around quite often.
4. Vivek: On another note of segregation, there are many 4th-year MCR members who don't turn up to events or socialize with rest of MCR. Are there ways to fix that? Does it need to be fixed?
- a. Zhi feels this is a good question. His attitude towards events is that we have too many events for the number of people. Instead, we should focus our attention on one event (a signature activity) so people are really attracted to one event. We currently have some small events, but low turnout, and instead should keep to 4-5 events per term.
  - b. Sonke asked if there were any 4th-years in the room? [No response.] He thinks this is probably not a problem - 4th years know the MCR is here if wanted. If they choose not to go because they have social circles outside MCR, is that a problem? He would try to tackle this in the same way as bringing more people in in general - by use of social media, etc.
5. Vivek: Does this not apply to same question about people who aren't involved in MCR? Does it make sense for mixing there rather than segregation? How could we make events beneficial for 4th years? [At this point, there clarification from Barbora: "4th-years" refers to 4th-year undergraduate members of the MCR. There had been some confusion, with the presidential candidates interpreting this to mean 4th-year PhD students. As a note - the 4th-years didn't get freshers emails last year.]
- Secretary:
    - Luana Fagarasan (could not make it but sent in a prerecorded video of her speech)

1. Luana is sorry that she couldn't make hustings, but she is in London for a talk. She thought that sending in a video might be a bit more personal than having someone read a speech on her behalf.
  2. She is a 2nd-year PhD student in the Computer Lab studying computational linguistics. She also did her master's degree at Churchill.
  3. She thinks that the MCR is a wonderful community and is so useful when first starting out. Some of the highlights for her include freshers' week, Guest Night, Spring Ball, and the summer cocktail night (especially since summer can be lonely around Cambridge).
  4. The MCR has a great say in shaping the social life of the Churchill graduate community, and now it's time to give something back and do it for others.
  5. The secretary role is a great position, as it is the point of contact between the MCR, the community, and the college committees.
  6. She will represent views in committee meetings together with the president, and promises not to spam.
  7. The secretary needs to be organized but also very approachable. Organization and time management skills are key.
  8. She is the current President of the Cambridge Entrepreneurs, which she feels recommends her for having these skills.
- Yuhua Guo
1. Yuhua just finished her undergrad at UCL and is a 1st-year PhD student studying human memory. Memory is very important to her, and being part of the Churchill MCR is one of her best memories. She wants to be the secretary to create better shared memory amongst people.
  2. She has been the secretary for two different societies at UCL. One was as part of the first executive committee for UNICEF on Campus and was in charge of newsletters and communication. She was later president of that group. The other was as part of the Chinese Students and Scholars Association. There she developed guidelines for the standard operating procedure of the organization along with the standard secretary responsibilities. She also acted as a node between the central committee and the various divisions, as well as a contact for other Chinese societies and the Chinese Embassy.

3. For the Churchill MCR, she would try to fulfill the responsibilities of the job as in her previous roles. She really likes this community and wants to contribute to it.
  4. She is very organized and good with time management - at her peak, she was running two different societies. This a way to get to know the MCR and College, and she would like to be able to continue to contribute in future years.
  5. She has dedication and commitment, and is very into it! Vote for her.
- Question:
    1. Alexis: Do you have ideas for other ways to communicate with students other than newsletter emails? It has been made clear that some students automatically delete things like the Gazette email.
      - a. She would first recommend to reset filters to not bin emails! Also, she would try to group emails with headlines in way that are easily navigated to indicate content of email - using keywords etc to flag up relevant emails. Also, there is the idea of separated mailing lists - split between e.g. undergrad and postgrad. In MCR, with divergent interests, we could consider splitting mailing lists in multiple regions so people could sign up for stuff they're interested in. Finally, advertised events in the Gazette are not put on MCR calendars - we could maybe have a Gazette calendar or include in MCR calendar.
  - Treasurer:
    - Christian Höcker (couldn't make it, but asked that the text of his manifesto be read out)
      1. "Dear MCR,  
I am running for the MCR treasurer position this year and would like to contribute to the Churchill MCR community a little bit more. As far as I am aware, Karolis did a brilliant job last year and the 'MCR Finances are in healthy state'. I want to continue this great work and based on last year's achievements and your inputs efficiently execute my duties as the treasurer.  
I just started my third year as a PhD student in Engineering, and besides that I am a 'fullpower' MCR Football Captain; successfully managing, coaching and playing in the Churchill MCR Football Team (whoever wants to get involved please get in touch). I have several experiences managing money and budgets - the most current one is the MCR Football one.  
Thanks, Christian"

## 6. Introduction to New Officers

- Internal social secretary - Diana Popescu
  - Diana is a first-year PhD student in computer science (Computer Lab). She hopes to organize great social events for everyone.
- External - Karolis Misiunas and KC Raghavendra (not present).
  - “They’re back!” Karolis and KC hope to organize a lot of new swaps as well as at least one MECHbop this year.
  - Hugo asked if they would be able to help the new internal social secretary with the work involved with Guest Night. Karolis replied that they would help out as much as possible.
- Men’s Welfare - Philip Mair
  - Philip grew up in Italy, studied in Switzerland, and wound up in Cambridge. He’s doing the men’s welfare role because he felt so welcome here in the Churchill MCR right from day one, and he hopes to continue to make people feel that welcome. He is looking forward to working with Clara and Elsa.
  - Hugo asked if they would send emails to the 4th-years during freshers’ week. It was pointed out that some years there are issues in getting that list in a reasonable timeframe.
- Women’s welfare - Clara Tang and Elsa Matthus (not present)
  - Clara is a 2nd-year PhD student in Neuroscience and comes from New Zealand. Elsa is a 1st-year PhD student in Plant Science and comes from Germany. They are both looking forward to being on the welfare team.
- Families’ rep - Flaviu Bulat
  - Flaviu is a 1st-year PhD student in Chemistry, and lives in the Wolfson Flats with Luana.
  - He noted that sometimes there is not a lot of communication between the upper and lower flats, and hopes to work on this.
- Bar treasurer - Vivek Chidambaram and Sami Goussous
  - Vivek is a 1st-year PhD student in Physics, and Sami is a 1st-year PhD student in Chemistry. They are looking forward to keeping the bar stocked for the MCR.
  - Karolis asked if they would keep a permanent stock of Crabbies in, which Jacqui and Alexis supported (i.e. the entire outgoing executive).
  - Hugo brought up some bank details that they will discuss further during handover.

## 7. Any Other Business

- Jacqui mentioned that during the advanced student audit at the most recent meeting of Governing Body, the subject of the conference travel grants was brought up. She asked if there was any possibility of a raise in the amount, and there may be potential for an increase from £300 to £350 (similar to this



year's increase in the small grants amount) as the amount hasn't been reassessed for a couple of years. This will have to be looked into on the college side.

Next TGM: date TBA, but in Easter term as decided by the new committee.