

AGENDA

GENERAL MEETING

ST. EDMUND HALL MCR

7:30 PM, 3rd February 2016

Apologies:

Alice Bloch

Benjamin Kelsey

Reports from MCR Committee Members

Nominations for Guest Membership

The following individuals have been put forward as nominees for Guest Membership of the St. Edmund Hall MCR:

- Elizabeth Goldblatt (nominated by Daniel Goldblatt)
 - Jonas Hasbach (nominated by Thomas Cosnahan)
 - Erin Huiting (nominated by Pip Coore)
 - Gabrielle Kanter (nominated by Pip Coore)
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Motion to Name the MCR Punt

The MCR has yet to name its newly acquired Punt. After discussions with some alumni it was suggested that the Punt could be named after a beloved former MCR Butler – “Mrs. Brown”.

Motion to Name the MCR Utilities Cupboard “Julie’s Cupboard”

As we are honoring a former MCR Butler by naming the MCR punt after her, the MCR Committee also proposes to formally name the MCR utilities cupboard “Julie’s Cupboard” as it affectionately known, after our former (and in hindsight, the last) MCR Butler. If this motion passes, the MCR will fund a plaque and arrange for this to be put on the door (pending approval from College).

Motion to Purchase Vitro BTC Coffee Machine

Following previous discussions regarding the MCR coffee machine, College have given us their proposal of the Vitro BTC. It is proposed that the Vitro BTC will be

merged with the current agreement with Express Vending, who supplies the JCR coffee machine.

The Vitro BTC drink selection includes:

- Cappuccino;
- Espresso;
- Black Coffee;
- Cafe Latte;
- Cafe Au Lait;
- Chocolate;
- Cafe Mocha;
- Latte Machiatto; and
- Hot Water.

Environmental Benefits of the Vitro BTC include (extracted from Express Vending brochure):

- First machine manufacturer to have machine independently tested to the EVA-EMP standard;
- Consumes just 86 watt hours / hr
- Advanced power saving options - economy mode / shut down
- LEF Lighting
- Paperless brewing system
- 90% of components recyclables at end of life

Added Benefits to the MCR:

- Less waste of filter coffee
- More choice of drink selection

NB: This machine does not include cardboard cups so there is no environmental impact. College will continue to provide coffee cups and mugs as usual.

It is proposed that the current filter coffee machines are replaced with the Vitro BTC commencing Trinity Term 2016 and continues for the entirety of the 63 month agreement with College. This motion attaches a **£5** compulsory termly fee, which will be batted to all MCR students for the privilege of the machine. This **£5** termly fee covers the weekly costs associated with the machine, including average weekly ingredients spend, management services (filling and cleaning) and any service, callouts, parts and labour required. This is the same arrangement (and price) as the JCR.

As this is an expense that concerns the entire MCR community, the MCR Committee would like for this motion to be voted on by an online poll, passing only if it receives a majority in favour for this motion. This online poll will be sent to the MCR mailing list on immediately following the General Meeting, i.e. **9 PM on Wednesday 3rd February** and voting will remain open until **9PM on Thursday 4th February**.

Although we are providing an online voting system for this motion, members are encouraged to come to the GM on Wednesday to participate in the discussion and raise any questions/concerns that they may have.

Motion to Provide Funding for 21CC Student Conference

Nick Harvey proposes that the MCR provide funding for this year's 21CC student conference. 21CC is a multidisciplinary conference, which unites leading minds to explore the opportunities and challenges of the 21st century.

A registered society of the University of Oxford, the conference is strategically partnered with the Oxford Martin School. This major institute unites the world leaders in politics, business and academia to steer research, policy and debate on global issues of this century. **£200** would allow us to provide travel expenses to external speakers to really improve both the quality and profile of the event. Invitations have been sent out to Dr Jane Goodhall, Dr Sian Griffiths (Director of the School of Public Health and Primary Care) and Charlie Brooker. The MCR and/or Teddy Hall would receive our thanks and publicity on the conference website and the programme for the day. There is also potential for us to provide incentives for MCR students.

Motion to Support the Lincoln College Vacation Project (VacProj) 2016

The Hall has been contacted by the Lincoln College Vacation Project ('VacProj') to ask whether we would consider making a charitable donation to this year's VacProj. VacProj is a student-led charity based at Lincoln College, Oxford, which organises and runs two holidays each summer, as well as day trips throughout the year, for some of the most disadvantaged children living in Oxfordshire. The holiday is only able to take place each year with the support of donors. This year, they need to raise £22,500. VacProj are asking for any support the Hall can offer. They have provided us with a copy of their 2015 newsletter, which students can read at the general meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

Item for Discussion: Formal Hall Booking

Currently, Formal Hall bookings are going 'live' on EPOS to Teddy Hall students at the beginning of each term for the entire term worth of Formal Hall bookings. The Committee has become aware that Formal Halls are being completely booked out within the first week of term. This is mainly due to students booking the maximum amount of guests (4) without assigning their guest a name for several dates within the term. The result of which is that many MCR members are not able to book on to any Formal Halls throughout the term. This issue has

been raised at various College Committee discussions and College are keen to hear the thoughts of the MCR and the MCR Committee are keen to ensure that our Formal Hall booking system is fair and effective to our members. In order to ensure we represent you all, we want to open this up for discussion to hear your thoughts. To start this discussion, we have outlined below possible measures, which may be a suitable solution. These are:

1. Fortnightly Booking System

A fortnightly booking system was trialed last year however it made no noticeable difference in the booking trends, which is why College reverted back to the current booking system. Re-introducing this system may result in a positive change to bookings as students will know their schedules two weeks in advance and therefore we may not have as many students reserving places too far in advance.

2. Limit Maximum Guests

Currently students are able to invited 4 guests. This could be taken down to 3, 2, or 1. This will make it difficult for students to invite a group of friends or family members or those who would like to invite their research group to Formal Hall.

3. Price Increase for Guests

Currently guests pay the same (subsidised) price for Formal Hall as students. Increasing the price for guest bookings will give people the incentive to only book for themselves. It will be less interesting to block a lot of guest spaces and try to sell them over Facebook shortly before the dinner. But obviously, it will raise the costs for everyone who likes to bring a guest once in a while.

5. Formal Hall Booking Quota

Although this is not technically possible, this could be a proposed guideline to Formal Hall bookings, which will be manually checked, in which case people who have overbooked themselves on numerous occasions could be warned and then blocked (if need be) from Formal Hall bookings for that term.

The Committee does not want to impose too many restrictions on Formal Hall bookings so as to ensure Formal Hall is still an enjoyable event within the termly calendar however it is evident that some measurements need to be put in place to ensure maximum participation from the entire MCR community so we would appreciate your feedback and any ideas you have. The JCR Committee has raised this with the JCR and we are informed that they are in favour of limiting the number of guests to 3, open booking 3 weeks in advance and possibly to increase the charge for guests.

Item for Discussion: MCR Guidelines on the Use of Social Media and other Online Services

Members of St. Edmund Hall, at the prompting of the Dean and the Principal, have recently been asked to review their policies for the use of member run and maintained social media and other online forums. At discussions during MCR Committee meetings, and the College Executive Committee meeting, the point was raised that the MCR does not currently have a clear statement regarding such policies.

In light of this, the MCR Committee proposes to draft certain guidelines to promote a safe and tolerant environment in/on all forms of MCR maintained social media/online forums.

A draft document, prepared by the MCR Committee, is annexed as **APPENDIX I**.

Item for Discussion: Feedback from Academic Committee, including:

- 1) Consultation re: MCR views on nature and timing of Postgraduate Schools Dinner; and**
- 2) Discussion re: Postgraduate College Grant.**

Alice Bloch, the MCR Academic Representative, who has raised this Item for discussion will be unable to attend, with her apologies. The Vice-President will take feedback on her behalf.

A report from Academic Committee (AC) and a further description of the matter for discussion are contained in **APPENDIX II**.

APPENDIX I

MCR Guidelines on the Use of Social Media and other Online Services

This MCR hereby affirms that:

- The Middle Common Room should be a safe space in all respects, both in the real world and cyberspace.
- At times, some MCR members may act in a way that is at odds with the safe and tolerant atmosphere that we hope to cultivate.
- At times, liabilities for the St. Edmund Hall, the MCR or individual members arise due to a disregard for the nature of social media and the ease with which communication(s), which are perceived to be private, can be accessed publically.
- The MCR should maintain a balance between members' right to freedom of expression, right to privacy and duty to create a space free of harassment.

To this effect we hereby agree to adopt and adhere to the following guidelines:

1. MCR members agree to take personal responsibility for their posts, emails, comments and any other form of online communication.
2. MCR members will refrain from using any MCR or St. Edmund Hall social media/other online forums to make personal attacks or engage any form of harassment.
3. Only currently serving MCR Committee Members shall act as Administrators on the MCR Facebook Page.
4. At the end of every academic year, the MCR Committee will renew the Facebook group to include only current MCR students. The remaining Facebook group will then be used as an Alumni group for that year.
5. MCR members will bring to the notice of the MCR Committee any behavior that they feel is a personal attack on themselves or another member of the MCR, rather than engaging with the alleged transgressor publicly.

The MCR Committee will attempt to mediate between the concerned parties to help settle the matter. If parties are still not satisfied after the Committee's intervention, the Committee will refer the matter, on request, to the Dean of St. Edmund Hall.

6. The MCR agrees to charge the MCR Committee with removing any communication(s) that may be deemed harassment or otherwise unsuitable, according to the University of Oxford University Policy and Procedure on Harassment, which are available at <https://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/eop/harassmentadvice/policyandprocedure/>.

The MCR Committee shall remove such communication(s) on notice from concerned members of the MCR, or by its own motion, if it deems that the communication(s) violates the University guidelines.

Before removing any communication(s) the Committee will give the poster a reasonable opportunity to answer any complaint.

APPENDIX II

REPORT FROM ACADEMIC REPRESENTATIVE

1. **Opportunities for PGCE Students:** AC recommended that **opportunities should be provided to PGCE students to observe undergrad tutorials and interviews.** This is going to Governing Body for decision.
2. **The nature and timing of this year's Postgraduate Schools Dinner** is open for review - It's usually held in late Trinity term, but in recent years has been poorly attended by staff and students. One possible solution is that we merge the dinner with the MCR Trinity Dinner. I was asked to consult you all on this proposal and on ways to improve attendance - a decision is to be made at AC in Week 5. Please provide feedback...
3. **The Postgraduate College Grant** was discussed, after concerns had been raised (re: students outside of their period of fee liability not being eligible to access the £350 a year funds). The Tutor for graduates explained that two concerns had recently been raised concerning this grant:
 - i. **On 18th Feb 2015 the Committee had determined that only those grads who were within fee liability should be eligible.** This was not a change to previous practice, but because the number of on-course grads who were outside fee liability had increased, the question of whether the grant should be available to them had gained greater prominence - i.e. there hadn't in fact been a change to the grant.
 - ii. **Some claimable costs - e.g. attending a rare major conference - might be higher than the present annual allowance.**

As MCR rep, I suggested reasons why students outside their period of fee liability might need access to the grant (conference attendance, research supplementary to writing up, the exhaustion of other funds, etc), but other members of the Committee stressed the need to distinguish between primary research and writing up; indeed, many felt that writing up should be the principal focus once fee liability was exceeded.

The Committee recognised that writing up practices varied across divisions but said it was important that students stay on schedule. Limiting financial provision for students beyond fee liability "acted as a prompt to departments to ensure appropriate progression timescales and procedures". AC thus reiterated that the grant should usually be available only to students within their period of fee liability.

The Committee also wanted to draw our attention to other sources of support e.g.

- The Mrs Brown Bursaries and Writing up Grants
- The Vice-Chancellor's Fund
- The MCR's own 50th Anniversary Fund

- College Officers could also exercise discretion in exceptional cases, and the Principal also has access to discretionary funds.

College also wanted to stress that it is able to (and will) act as a student's advocate with their department (where departmental funds should be expected), and emphasised the need for early engagement.

To address the second concern above - i.e. that the annual limit was sometimes not enough to costs such as one-off big conferences - the Tutor for Grads proposed a "**whole-degree allowance, the value of which would be based on the number of years of fee liability**". The Committee accepted this proposal in principle, and asked the Tutor for Grads to model future budgets...

The Committee did not specifically ask for feedback on this, and it's not yet taking a formal decision on this, but I think that this possible change is something the MCR should be aware of - please do provide thoughts if possible.